

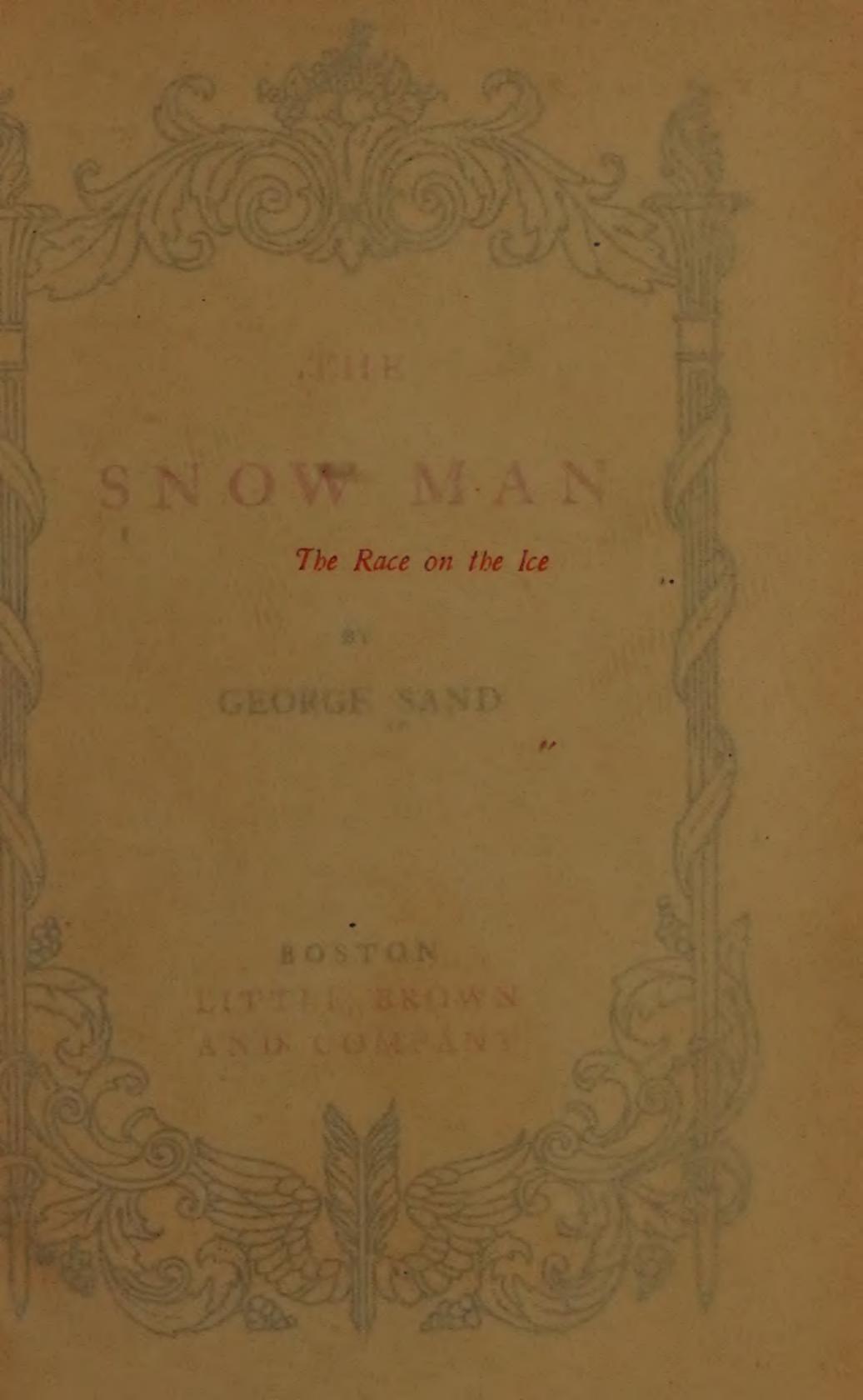
Juniata College
Library

CLASS 84382 BOOK Sa54E

ACCESSION 11232

Library Fund






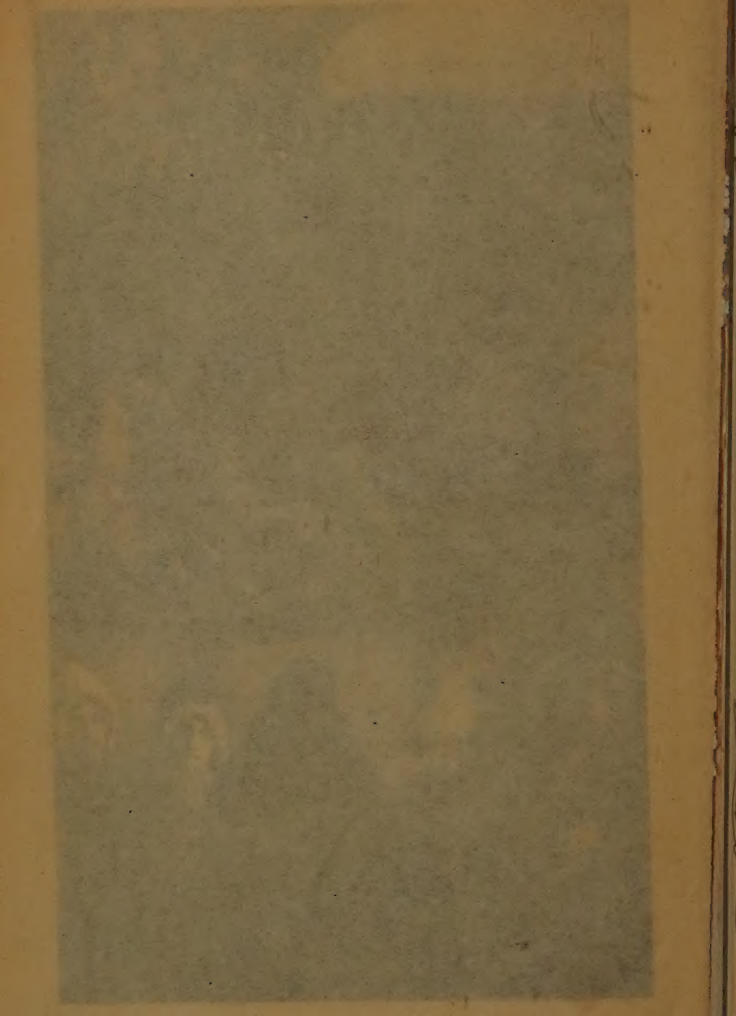
THE
SNOW MAN

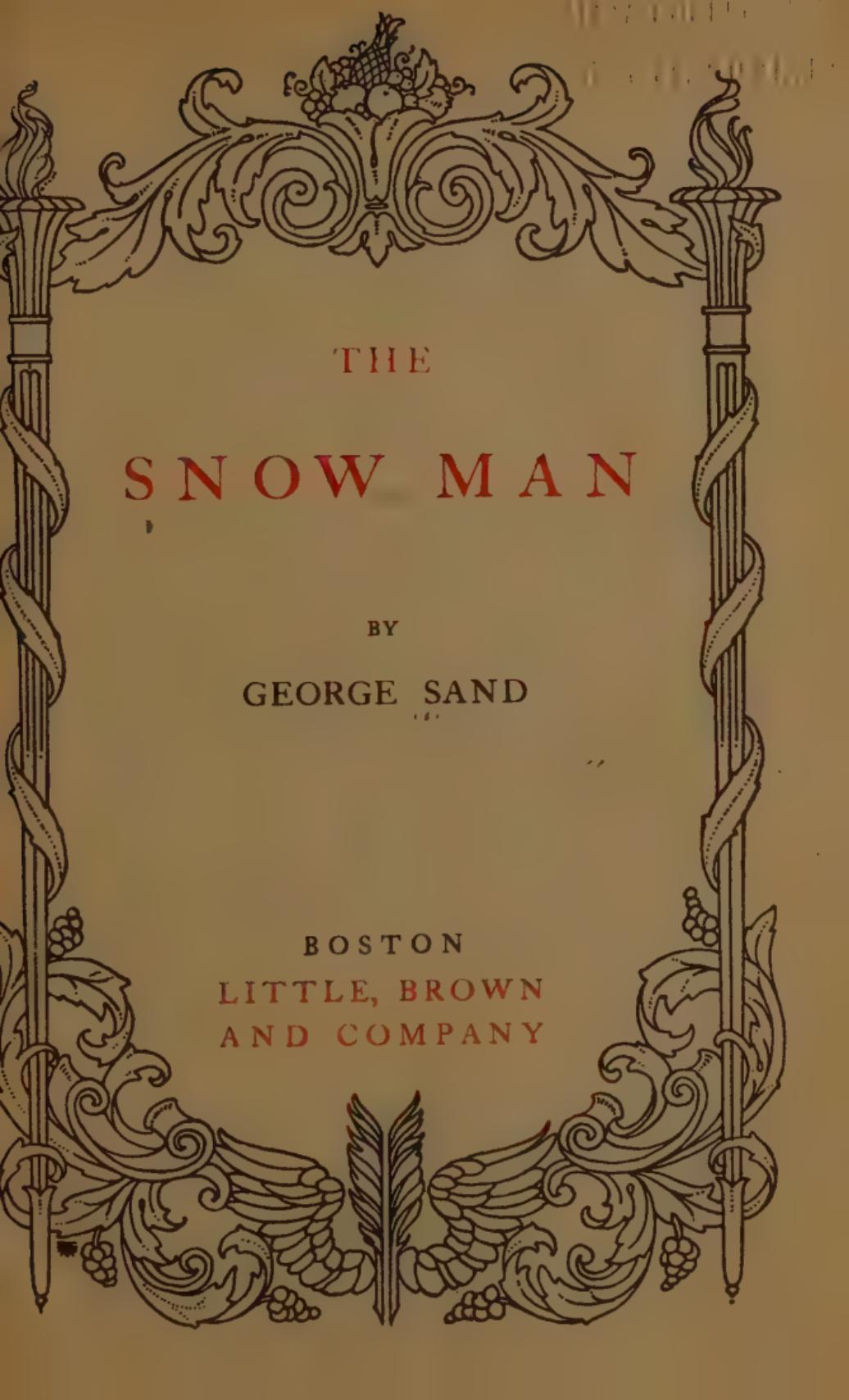
The Race on the Ice

BY
GEORGE SAND

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN
AND COMPANY







THE
SNOW MAN

BY
GEORGE SAND

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN
AND COMPANY

Copyright, 1870,
BY ROBERTS BROTHERS.

Copyright, 1898,
BY LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.

Printers
S. J. PARKHILL & Co., BOSTON, U. S. A.

THE SNOW MAN.

WILL the reader be kind enough to enter with us at once into the subject of this story, as he does when, in the theatre, the curtain rises upon a situation which the actors proceed to explain.

In the same way, we beg him to go with us straightway into the heart of the locality which is the scene of this narrative; — yet there is this difference, that in the theatre the curtain seldom rises upon an empty stage; while in the present instance, the narrator and the reader are to be for a few moments alone together.

The place into which we are thus conveyed, is sufficiently strange and not particularly agreeable. It is a four-sided room, at first sight apparently a regular square, but one of its angles is really more acute than the others, as we observe the moment we notice the dark-colored wooden ceiling whose projecting beams cross each other in a distinctly irregular manner in the north-east corner.

This irregularity is made still more obvious by a wooden staircase with a balustrade somewhat elaborately worked, and of a massive character, seemingly of the end of the sixteenth century or the beginning of the seventeenth. This staircase goes up six steps, pauses at a small landing-place, turns a right angle, and after six steps more ends abruptly in the wall. The arrangements of the building have been changed; and it would have been natural to remove the staircase at the same time, for it only encumbers the room. Why was this not done? This, dear reader, is the question we put

to each other. But, notwithstanding this proof of respect or indifference, the apartment which we are examining has retained all its ancient comforts. An immense circular stove, in which no fire has been lighted for a long time, serves as a pedestal for a very handsome clock of the style of Boule, whose glasses, tarnished and almost iridescent with moisture, throw out metallic reflections into the gloom. A handsome copper chandelier of the Dutch fashion hangs from the ceiling, covered with a coat of verdigris so thick, that it looks like a piece of malachite work. Twelve wax candles, whole (with one exception), though yellow with age, are still standing in the wide metallic sockets, whose size has the advantage of not allowing a drop of wax to fall, and the disadvantage of casting a deep shadow on the floor, while the light is all reflected up to the ceiling.

The twelfth of the candles in this chandelier is three-fourths burnt away. We happen to note this, friendly reader, because we are examining everything with such minute attention. Otherwise we might very easily have overlooked it, in consequence of the strange ornament which partly covers the chandelier and its candles, and hangs along its branches in opaque folds. Probably you take it to be a piece of gray cloth long ago thrown over the fixture to protect the copper. Touch it, if you can reach high enough. You see that it is an accumulation of spiders' webs, almost as compact as parchment, and loaded with dust.

These spiders' webs are everywhere else too. They hang all over the smoked frames of the large family portraits that fill three sides of the room, and in the corners they are festooned with a sort of regularity, as if some austere and industrious fate had assumed the form of a spider, and undertaken to furnish hangings for these deserted wainscots, complete enough to cover even the least crevice.

But of the spiders themselves you will not find one. The cold has made them torpid, or killed them; and if you should be obliged — as I hope you will not — to pass a night in this melancholy room, you would not have even

these industrious little creatures to keep you company. The clock, whose tick-tack is not unlike the regular ticking of some insects, is mute as they. Its hands have stood still upon the dial at four o'clock in the morning, for God knows how many years.

I say four o'clock in the morning, for the reason that in the country where we now are, the striking part of old timepieces indicates whether the hours are those of the night or of the day—for there the days are sometimes only five hours long, and the nights nineteen. If you were fatigued with your journey and should sleep late, you might not know, when you awoke, whether it was the next morning after your arrival, or the next morning but one. If the clock were going it would tell you, but it is not, and it is impossible to tell whether it could be made to go.

Well; what country is it? We shall learn without having to go outside the room. Along the whole length of the irregular wall, by which the staircase is built, and which, like the three other sides, is more than half covered with oaken wainscot, large maps are hung; very likely because their shape rendered it a convenient place. They are longer horizontally than their height, and accordingly just cover that part of the wall above the woodwork. They seem to be banished here rather than exhibited, and we shall have to go up the twelve steps of the staircase ending in the wall, to convince ourselves that these long bands of parchment, colored in the hardest tints, are maps, charts, and plans of strong cities.

The staircase leads us precisely to the height of that one of these maps representing the country, which was undoubtedly placed just there for convenience of consultation; and also, perhaps, to hide the place where a door has been built up.

This great green serpent in the middle of the picture is the Baltic Sea. I presume that you recognize it from its resemblance to a dolphin with a double tail, and from the innumerable indentations of its *fiords*—narrow and winding gulfs that run far into the rocky coast.

Don't get lost on the side of Finland, which is there

painted in yellow ochre ; look on the other shore for about the middle of Sweden (painted red), and you will recognize, from its lakes, from its rivers and mountains, the province of Dalecarlia, a region which was still comparatively uncivilized at the time to which this story refers. It is in the last century, towards the close of the kindly but troubled reign of Adolphus-Frederick of Holstein-Gottorp, at one time the Protestant Bishop of Lubeck, but who afterwards married Ulrica of Prussia, the friend of Voltaire, the sister of Frederick the Great ; in a word, as far as we can judge, it is about the year 1770.

Rather later, we shall see the aspect of this country. You must be satisfied at present, dear reader, to know that you are in a small, old chateau, perched on a rock, in the very centre of a frozen lake, which will naturally lead you to conclude that I have carried you there in mid-winter.

And now a last glance at this room while it is still ours ; for, gloomy and cold as it is, we shall soon have competitors for the use of it. It is furnished with old chairs of wood, quite artistically carved, but massive and inconvenient. One arm-chair, comparatively modern — that is of the time of Louis XVI.—is covered with silk that has become yellowed and stained, but it is still soft, and of a convenient shape for sleeping ; it looks out of place in the solemn company of the other worm-eaten chairs, with their high backs, which, for more than twenty years, have not been moved from the wall. To conclude, an old bed, with four twisted columns and curtains of tattered silk, stands in the corner opposite the staircase, and adds, by its dilapidated appearance, to the gloomy and sinister aspect of the place.

But we must retire, reader. The door opens, and you must depend upon me hereafter if you wish to know about the past and future events whose theatre I have thus shown you.

I.

FOR a full quarter of an hour some one had been knocking and ringing at the outside door of the gothic manor of Stollborg ; but the *bourrasque* was blowing so very furiously, and old Stenson was so extremely deaf ! The old man's nephew, Ulphilas, a colossal blond who assisted him in his duties, heard somewhat better, but he believed in ghosts, and was not at all anxious to open the door to them. M. Stenson, former steward of the Baron de Waldemora, was an invalid, and a man of melancholy character ; he was at present the overseer of Stollborg ; and he lived in one of the pavilions of this old, battered, and abandoned chateau. It really seemed to him that some one was knocking at the door of the court, but Ulphilas judiciously called his attention to the fact that the goblins and *trolls* of the lake were in the habit of playing just such tricks. Stenson, with a sigh, began to read his old Bible again, and in a very few moments went to bed.

At last, the persons outside became so impatient that they forced the lock of the door, introduced themselves into the court, and, following a narrow gallery on the ground-floor, entered, with their ass, the very room that we have just described, which was called the bear-room, from the crowned animal carved on the armorial shield above the outside window.

The door of this room was usually fastened, and its being open to-day was due to an unusual circumstance, about which, however, the strangers did not trouble themselves at all.

Rather strange-looking individuals were these unexpected visitors of Stollborg ! One of them was wrapped up in a sheepskin, and looked like one of those ugly scarecrows that are used in gardens and hemp-fields to frighten birds ; the other, who was tall and well made, resembled a good-natured Italian brigand.

The ass was a fine ass : strong, and carrying a load

that would have been sufficient for an ox ; he was so accustomed to travelling adventures, that he made no sort of objection to going up several steps, and showed no surprise when he found himself treading upon a pine floor instead of the straw of a stable. The poor ass was ill, however, and the taller of the two travellers who was leading him, looked after his comfort before attending to anything else.

"Puffo," he said, placing his lantern on a large table in the middle of the room, "Jean has a cold ; he is coughing as if he would split his lungs."

"*Parbleu*, I am no better off myself!" replied Puffo in Italian, the same language which his companion had employed ; "do you suppose, master, that it makes a fellow fresh and jolly to drag him about in this devil of a country?"

"I too am cold and tired," replied the master, as Puffo called him ; "but there is no use in complaining. Here we are, and we must not allow ourselves to die of cold. Look and see whether this is really the bear-room that we were told about."

"How shall I recognize it?"

"By those maps, and a staircase which leads nowhere. Was not that what they told us at the farm?"

"I don't know anything about it," replied Puffo. "I can't understand their beastly patois."

As he spoke, he took the lantern, and holding it higher than his head, said :

"What do I know about geography?"

His master looked up and exclaimed :

"This is the very room. There are the maps ; and here," he added, running lightly up the wooden staircase, and lifting the map that hung over the wall at the top of it, "is the place walled up. It's all right, Puffo, we need not distress ourselves any longer. The room is perfectly tight, and we can sleep here like princes."

"However, I don't see — Oh yes ! there is a bed, but there are neither mattresses nor coverlids, and they told us there were two good beds."

"You are quite a Sybarite ! Do you require a bed

wherever you go, my good fellow? Look and see if there is any wood in the stove, and light the fire."

"There's no wood at all; nothing but coal."

"That is still better. Light the fire, my lad, light it. As for me, I am going to attend to this poor Jean."

Taking a piece of carpet that lay before the stove, the young man began to rub the ass so vigorously, that in a few moments he himself was all in a glow.

"I was fairly warned," he said to Puffo, who was lighting the fire, "that the ass would suffer from the cold beyond the fifty-second degree of north latitude; but I did not believe it. The ass is not so delicate as the horse, which lives in Lapland; and besides, this one of ours is so healthy and good-natured! We can only hope that he will be as lucky as ourselves, and will keep alive for several days. He has not refused to work yet, and the poor beast carries with perfect docility a larger load than two horses would probably take, at least without being very much urged."

"No matter for that!" replied Puffo, kneeling before the stove, which was beginning to roar and sputter as if it were going to burn well; "you ought to have sold him in Stockholm, where so many people wanted him."

"Sell Jean! Sell him to be stuffed for a museum? Never, so help me heaven! He has worked well for me for a whole year; and, for my part, I love this faithful servant. Who knows, Puffo, whether I shall be able to say as much for you a year hence?"

"Pshaw, Master Cristiano! I don't care. Sentiment is not in my line; and I should trouble myself very little about the ass, if I could only find something to eat and drink."

"There is something in that, I confess. Sentiment does not take away the appetite, and I am as hungry as all the devils. Come, Puffo, let us be sensible, and go over what we have heard. They said at the new chateau — 'We have no room for you here. Even if you should come in the name of the king, we could not find you a corner as large as your hand. Go and lodge at the farm.' At the farm they said about the same thing;

but they gave us a lantern, and showing us a road cut out over the ice of the lake, advised us to go to the old chateau. The road is not agreeable, I acknowledge, amid these whirlwinds of snow, but the distance is short. You can return in ten minutes, at the outside, and my opinion is that you will have to make up your mind to do this, if you want any supper."

"But what if they turn us away from the farm as they did from the new chateau? They will say, perhaps, that they have already too much company to provide for, and that they have not a scrap of bread left for vagrants like us."

"The fact is, that our appearance is not prepossessing. That is what makes me afraid that this worthy M. Stenson, the old overseer who lives somewhere about the building, and who is very ill-tempered, they say, will drive us off the premises. But listen, Puffo: either the good man must be fast asleep, since we have succeeded in breaking open the door of the court and reaching this room without hindrance, or the noise of the wind drowns every other sound. Now what we have to do is to steal quietly into the kitchen, and the devil is to pay if we cannot find anything there."

"Much obliged to you," said Puffo; "I prefer recrossing the lake and going to the farm. There the people, although busy, were very polite, while old Stenson, it seems, is wicked, and a sort of monomaniac."

"Just as you choose, my good Puffo; off with you! Bring something back, if it is a possible thing, to warm us up a little. One word more, my sublime companion;—listen once for all."

"What is the matter now?" said Puffo, who was already tying the strings of his sheepskin in preparation for his departure.

"In the first place," replied Cristiano, "you must give me time to light one of the candles of this chandelier before carrying off the lantern."

"How can you reach them? I don't see any great supply of ladders in this damned bear-room."

"Stand there, I am going to climb on your shoulders. Are you firm?"

“Go on, you are not very heavy!”

“Now comrade,” said the young man, planting his feet upon Puffo’s broad shoulders, and seizing one of the branches of the chandelier with one hand, while with the other he tried to snatch a candle from its socket, without bringing down the dusty spiders’ webs into his eyes; “listen to me! I have not precisely the honor of knowing you. For three months we have been travelling companions, and aside from the fact that you are rather too fond of taverns, you seem to me to be not a bad fellow; but you may be a great rogue for all that, and I am not sorry to have an opportunity of telling you —”

“Say what you are going to, and have done with it, will you?” replied Puffo, shaking himself a little. “I wish you would make haste up there, instead of lecturing. You are not so light as I thought.”

“I have done,” replied Cristiano, leaping nimbly to the earth, for he imagined that his companion was a little inclined to let him fall; “I have got my candle, and will continue my discourse. We are, for the moment, two Bohemians, Puffo — two poor adventurers; but I am in the habit of behaving like a sensible man, while you sometimes take pleasure in conducting yourself like a beast. Now, I want you to understand that the greatest folly, the meanest and flattest thing that a man can be guilty of in my eyes, is to follow the trade of a thief.”

“Where did you ever see me stealing?” said Puffo, gloomily.

“If I had seen you stealing in my company I should have broken your back, my friend; that is why it is only fair that I should let you know what my views on the subject are. I told you just now to try and obtain some supper by persuasion or cunning. So far we have a right to go. We were invited into this snow paradise to employ our talents for the entertainment of a large party of distinguished persons. We were provided with money to pay the expenses of the journey, and it is not our fault that it was lost. We are promised a sufficient amount, of which I intend to give you a handsome share, although you are only the apprentice, while I am the master. We

have no reason to complain, therefore, but always on condition that we are not left to die of cold and hunger. Now we happen to arrive at our employer's chateau at night, just as his illustrious guests have gone to supper, when his highly respectable lackeys are in a great hurry to get their supper, and when belated travellers have no right to be hungry. Consequently it is a matter of necessity for us to get our own supper to-night in some way or other, so that we may be in condition to fulfil our engagements to-morrow. We shall neither offend heaven nor our host by laying hands upon a few good dishes and some bottles of wine; but, to slip silver into our pockets and hide linen under the pack-saddle of our ass, would be an asinine proceeding, since silver is not good to eat, and since it ruins linen to be stowed away under a saddle. Do you understand, Puffo? We are perfectly authorized in taking food, but no stealing, or a hundred lashes on your back. That is what I intended to tell you."

"All right!" replied Puffo, shrugging his shoulders; "you have been a long time coming to the point. You are a dreadful chatterbox."

Puffo went off with the lantern in a state of considerable discontent with his patron, who had, in fact, good reasons for suspecting his honesty, having several times discovered among his professional apparatus sundry objects whose sudden acquisition Puffo had been unable to explain in a satisfactory manner.

It was not without reason, upon the other hand, that Puffo accused Cristiano of being a chatterbox. He was, at all events, a great talker, as all men endowed with strong intellectual and physical vitality are apt to be. Puffo, with his mere rude glibness of speech and his vulgar instincts, felt the ascendancy of a mind and character infinitely superior to his own. He, however, was the stronger of the two, and when the tall and slender Cristiano threatened this thick-set and muscular Livornese, it was his moral influence or his agility that he relied upon, rather than physical strength, to enforce his authority.

When Cristiano was left alone, he abandoned himself to his innocent affection for his ass. He had relieved him

from his baggage as soon as they entered the bear-room. This baggage, consisting of two large boxes, a bundle of light poles of white wood with their cross-pieces taken apart, and finally a package of curtains and tapestries which were still quite fresh, carefully rolled in a leather case, he arranged in a corner. All this was his artistic apparatus,—the tools of his trade, his livelihood. As for his wardrobe, it gave him no sort of trouble. It consisted merely of a little bundle of linen tied up in a handkerchief, and a cloak of coarse cloth, which made a good covering for Jean when it left the back of its owner. The rest of his effects he wore—to wit, a Venetian cape a good deal defaced, small-clothes of some stout material, and three pair of woollen stockings, one over the other.

His cape, his woollen cap, and his broad-brimmed hat, Cristiano had taken off, so as to be more at his ease in setting things to rights. He was a tall, slender fellow, with a remarkably handsome face, shaded by a profusion of black hair in great disorder.

The warmth of the stove began to make itself felt, and besides, the young man was too vigorous to be sensitive to the cold. He went about the room, therefore, in his shirt-sleeves, and made arrangements to pass the night as comfortably as possible. It was not the absence of the beds they had been told about that troubled him, but the fear that he would not be able to find Jean anything to eat and drink.

“I was very foolish,” he said to himself, “not to think about that as I passed the new chateau and the farm; but how can one think of anything with the wind blowing ice-needles into his eyes? They told us at the farm (and I remember now that they said so in a very sarcastic way) that we would find an abundance of everything at the old chateau, if old Stenson would be good enough to let us in; now as we were obliged to break the door open, it seems that he was not good enough. Well, whether or no, I must find out how the Cerberus of this old ruin will take our being here. After all, I have my contract in my pocket, and, if they try to turn me out here too, I will show my teeth.”

Thereupon Cristiano placed Jean, together with his baggage, in the recess under the staircase, and as he was seeking, candle in hand, for a nail or peg to which to tie the ass, he saw that there was a door in the wainscot just at the farthest part of this recess, and in the defective angle of the room.

As he had not noticed the irregularity in the plan of the room, he could not tell whether the passage-way into which the door opened was in a thick wall, or between two walls joined above. He pushed the secret door—for it was one—without expecting that it would open, and, seeing that it was not fastened in any way, he cautiously went forward to see what he could find. He had not gone three steps when the candle went out. Luckily the fire was burning, and he was able to light it again, while listening with a certain pleasure to the sharp and melancholy whistling of the wind in the secret passage.

Cristiano had a romantic disposition, and was in the habit of indulging in poetic fancies. It seemed to him that the spirits so long imprisoned in this abandoned hall were complaining at being disturbed in their mysteries; and as he was afraid, moreover, that the cold would increase poor Jean's cough, he took pains, when he went out again, to shut the door after him; he had noticed, beforehand, that there were strong bolts on the outside, but that its own weight was sufficient to keep it in its place.

We will leave him for the present to proceed on his expedition, and introduce another traveller into the bear-room.

This also is an unexpected visitor, but he is accompanied by Ulphilas, who lights him with respect, while they are followed by a shivering little serving-lad, dressed in a full suit of red. These three persons are talking Dalecarlian; and they are still in the court, Ulphilas with a terrified expression, and the two others looking very impatient.

"Come, Ulph, come, my lad," said the stranger, "don't be so formal; light us to this famous room, and attend to my horse at once. He is all in a sweat with dragging the sleigh up your little rock. Good horse! I would not lose him for ten thousand rix dollars."

The person who addressed Ulphilas thus was the senior advocate of the city of Gevala, Doctor of Laws of the Faculty of Lund.

"What, Monsieur Goeffle,* do you want to stay here all night? Do you really mean so?"

"Hush, hush! I know it will annoy honest Sten; but, when I am once installed, he will have to make up his mind to it. Take the horse, I tell you—I know the way."

"What, Monsieur Advocate, you come here all alone in the night with your grandson?"

"You rascal! you know very well that I have no children. Here, little Nils, come and help me unharness poor Loki. You see that it is the fashion here to talk, and do nothing else. Come, rouse yourself; are you frozen with a trip of three or four hours at nightfall?"

"Leave him alone, Monsieur Goeffle, he is too little," said Ulphilas, feeling the lawyer's reproach. "Take the first door to the right, and get under shelter; I will answer for the horse."

"Nonsense, it has stopped snowing! This little flurry has only made the weather milder," resumed M. Goeffle, who, both by profession and taste, was no less of a talker than Cristiano. "I have not been cold at all, and shall do capitally if I eat a good plate of porridge, and smoke a good pipe, before going to bed. Come, Nils, carry one of these bundles into the room yonder; it will be something for you to do, and will warm you. Are you asleep already? It is not more than seven o'clock."

"Oh, Monsieur Goeffle," said the little lad, with his teeth chattering, "it has been night for a long time, and I am always so afraid in the night."

"Afraid? Of what, pray? Well, console yourself; at this season the days are getting a minute and a half longer daily."

*Gevala, Gefle, Gesle, and Goeffle, are different ways of writing the name of the same town. The name of the advocate in question happened to be the same as that of the town in which he practised.

Talking away after this fashion, M. Goeffle, who was a man of about sixty, dry, active and cheerful, himself put the horse into the stable, while Ulphilas drew the sleigh into the coach-house, and hung up the harness and bells. In the meanwhile, little Nils still sat shivering on the luggage which was under the wooden gallery around the court.

When M. Goeffle was satisfied that his beloved Loki, the handsome and generous little horse whom he had named for the Prometheus of the Scandinavian mythology, would want for nothing, he turned, and with his firm step proceeded towards the bear-room.

"Wait, wait, Monsieur Advocate," said Ulphilas. "that is not the way. The double-bedded room that we call the guard-room—"

"*Parbleu!* I know all about it," replied M. Goeffle. "I have slept in it before now."

"Perhaps so, but that was a long time ago. It is so out of repair now—"

"Well, if it is out of repair you can make me up a bed in the bear-room."

"In the —"

Ulph dared not finish, so monstrous did M. Goeffle's suggestions seem. Taking courage after a pause, he resumed:—

"No, M. Goeffle, no! That is impossible; you are joking! I will go and look for the key of the other room, which perhaps is in a better state than I thought (my uncle sometimes goes there), and since there is a second door to the gallery, you won't have the annoyance of going through, you know."

"What! Has not that poor bear-room lost its bad reputation since the staircase door was walled up? Nonsense, Ulph, my lad, you are old enough to know better. I insist upon your opening the door immediately. It is too cold to wait here while you go in search of other keys, and since you have it about you—"

"I haven't got it!" cried Ulphilas. "I swear to you, M. Goeffle, that I haven't got the key of the *bear* any more than that of the *guard*."

While discussing thus, M. Goefle, accompanied by Ulphilas, who lighted him very unwillingly, and Nils, who followed close at his heels, reached the second door of the donjon, upon the ground-floor of which the bear-room was situated. As this door was only fastened by an outside bolt, the advocate entered the inner court without difficulty, and going up three steps, pushed the door of the bear-room, which, yielding to his impatient hand, opened wide with such a plaintive squeak, that Nils started back in terror.

"Open! It was open!" cried Ulphilas, turning as pale as his red and shining face was capable of becoming.

"Well, suppose it was?" said M. Goefle. "Stenson, no doubt, has been through this way."

"He never comes here, Monsieur Goefle. Oh, there's no danger of that!"

"So much the better, then. I can get settled without troubling him, and without his knowing anything about it. But what have you been telling me? Some one must have been here, for there is a fire in the stove! I see how it is, Monsieur Ulphilas Stenson! You have let or promised this room to some one whom you are waiting for. The deuce! so much the worse for them. There is no room at the new chateau, and you must make room for me here. But never mind, my poor fellow, I will pay you as well as any one. Light these candles; that is to say, go and get something to trim them with, and then bring bed-clothes, warming-pans, whatever we may need; and, above all things, don't forget the supper. Nils will help you; he is very quick, very skilful, and very obliging. Come, Nils, exert yourself: find our bed-room, the guard-room, as Ulphilas calls it, all alone; I know where it is, but I won't tell you. Look for it; show us how bright you are, Master Nils."

Good Monsieur Goefle might as well have been talking in a desert. Ulphilas was standing petrified in the middle of the room, Nils was warming his hands at the stove, and the doctor was left to get settled as he best could.

At last Ulph heaved a sigh that might have turned a mill-wheel, and said in an emphatic voice, —

“Upon my honor, Monsieur Goeffe, upon my eternal salvation, I have neither let nor promised this room to any one. How can you think such a thing when you know what has happened here, and what goes on even now. Oh! nothing would induce my uncle Stenson to let you stop here. I will inform him of your arrival, and since they were not able to accommodate you at the new chateau, he will give you up his own room.”

“I will not allow anything of the kind,” replied M. Goeffe; “you must not even tell him that I have come. He will learn to-morrow that I am here, and am very comfortable. The guard-room is rather small, but it will do very well for sleeping, and this shall be my drawing room and office. It is not particularly cheerful; but for two or three days I shall be quiet, at least.”

“Quiet!” cried Ulphilas. “Quiet in a room haunted by the devil?”

“What makes you think that, friend Ulph?” said the doctor of laws, smiling, while little Nils began to shiver again, from fear quite as much as the wintry cold.

“I think so for three reasons,” replied Ulph, with gloomy solemnity. “In the first place, you found the door of the court open, although I had locked it after sunset; in the second place, the door of this room was also open, a thing that has not happened since I came here five years ago to take care of my uncle and wait upon him. The third and most incredible thing of all is, that there is a fire lighted, and that the stove is warm, although no fire has been made here for twenty years, and perhaps more. Lastly — hold, Monsieur Doctor, look! — there is some wax freshly spilled on the floor, and yet —”

“You spilled it yourself, you idiot; you are holding your lantern upside-down.”

“Oh, no, Monsieur Goeffe! mine is a tallow candle, and that under the chandelier — wait!”

Ulph looked up and uttered a cry of **horror** on seeing

that there were only ten candles and a half in the chandelier, instead of eleven and a half.

The lawyer was naturally kind and good-natured. Instead of allowing the preoccupation of Ulphilas, and the terror of Nils, to make him angry, he only thought of amusing himself at their expense.

"Well, God be praised!" he said, very seriously, "that proves that there are kobolds here; and if they will only be so good as to appear to me (I have wanted to become acquainted with them all my life, without ever seeing a single one), I shall congratulate myself all the more upon coming to this room, where I can sleep under their kind protection."

"No, no, Monsieur Doctor," replied Ulphilas, "there are no kobolds here! This is a melancholy and accursed place, as you know; a place where the trolls of the lake come to disturb and spoil everything, like wicked spirits as they are, while the little kobolds are friendly to man, and only think of doing him good. The kobolds save, and do not waste. They never carry anything away —"

"On the contrary, they bring! I know all about that, Master Ulph; but how do you know that I have not a kobold of my own who came on here before me? Very likely he took the candle to light the fire, so that I might find a warm place on my arrival; and, knowing that you were a great coward, who would keep me waiting a long time, opened the doors beforehand. Now, he is all ready, no doubt, to help you about my supper, if you will only be as good as to attend to it, for you know kobolds don't like lazy folks, and only wait upon those who show a disposition to help others."

This explanation soothed, in a measure, the fears of his two auditors. Nils ventured to turn his great blue eyes upon the gloomy walls of the apartment, and Ulph, after giving the lawyer a key to the closet of the guard-room, went to prepare their supper.

"Well, Nils," said the lawyer to his little servant, "we can scarcely see at all with this abominable lantern. You can make up the beds later; in the meanwhile, go and unpack my trunk. Put it on the table."

"But, Monsieur Doctor," said the child, "I cannot so much as lift it; it is heavy."

"True," replied the lawyer; "it is full of papers, and is very heavy."

He himself took the trunk, and with a slight effort placed it upon a chair, adding, —

"At any rate, take the valise with my clothes. I have only brought what was necessary, and it is very light."

Nils obeyed, but he could not open the padlock.

"I thought you were more skilful than that," said the lawyer, becoming a little impatient: "your aunt told me — I am afraid my good Gertrude praised you rather too highly."

"Oh," replied the child, "I can open trunks very well when they are not locked. But tell me, Monsieur Goefle, is it true that you have a kobold to wait upon you?"

"What, a kobold? Oh yes! I was thinking of something else. Do you believe in kobolds, my boy?"

"Yes, if there are any. Aren't they wicked sometimes?"

"Never; especially as they do not exist."

"Oh, but you said just now —"

"I only said that to laugh at that blockhead. As for you, Nils, I don't want you to believe in any such nonsense. You know that I intend to make you something more than a mere servant: to educate you a little, and make you sensible, if I can."

"But, Monsieur Goefle, my aunt Gertrude believes in them. She believes in good and bad spirits."

"My housekeeper? She takes good care not to acknowledge it before me. She pretends to be strong-minded, when I have time to talk to her. No, no, you are mistaken; she doesn't believe anything of the kind. She only says so to amuse you."

"But it doesn't amuse me at all; it makes me afraid, and keeps me awake all night."

"In that case she is wrong. But what are you about? Is that the way that you unpack a trunk, throwing everything on the floor? Was it so that the pastor of Falun taught you to wait on him?"

"I did not wait upon the pastor, Monsieur Goeffe. He only took me to play with his little boy, who was ill, and we had such a good time! We used to make little paper boats, and little bread sleighs, all day long."

"Oh, ho! that is worth knowing!" said the doctor of laws, angrily; "and Gertrude told me that you were so useful in that house."

"I was very useful, Monsieur Goeffe!"

"Yes, making paper boats and bread sleighs! That assuredly is a very useful employment! But let me tell you that if you can't do anything else, at your age —"

"I know as much as other children ten years old, Monsieur Goeffe."

"The devil! ten years old? Are you only ten years old? Your aunt said that you were thirteen or fourteen. Well, brat, what is the matter? What are you crying about?"

"Why, Monsieur Doctor, you are scolding me; it is not my fault if I am only ten years old."

"Correct! That is the first sensible remark you have made since I was so fortunate as to take you into my service this morning. Come, dry your eyes and wipe your nose. I am not angry. You are large and strong for your age, at all events; and what you don't know, you will learn. What do you say?"

"Oh yes, Monsieur Goeffe! that is just what I should like."

"But will you learn quickly? I am very impatient, I can tell you!"

"Yes indeed, monsieur, I will learn everything right off."

"Do you know how to make a bed?"

"I think so. At the pastor's I always used to make mine all by myself."

"Or you did not make it at all! Never mind, we shall soon see."

"But, Monsieur Goeffe, when my aunt came to Falun this morning to see me off on my journey, she told me that I wouldn't have to work. She said: 'You won't have anything to do at the chateau where you are going

with your master. In the chateau of the Baron de—de —,”

“De Waldemora?”

“Yes, that’s it! —‘there are beautiful rooms always in order, and plenty of servants to do everything. What Monsieur Goefle wants is, that you should always be on hand to give orders in his place. He don’t wish to take François, because François would never stay in his room. He was always drinking, and amusing himself with the other servants, and monsieur would have to run and hunt him up to get what he wanted. That put him out, and he did not like it at all. Now you must be very good, and never leave him; do you hear? You must see that he is well waited upon, and then you will be waited upon too.’”

“So,” said the doctor, “that is what you expect!”

“I am sure I am very good, Monsieur Goefle. I don’t leave you; I am not running about with the tall servants at the chateau.”

“Would to heaven you were! I defy you to do anything of the kind, however, in our present quarters.”

“Why? Is the road over the lake the only way to the new chateau?”

“The only way; otherwise, I see plainly that you would already be with the tall valets in livery.”

“Oh no, Monsieur Goefle, since you wouldn’t like it! But how beautiful it was over there!”

“Where, at Waldemora?”

“Yes, that’s the name of the new chateau. Oh, Monsieur Goefle, it was a great deal prettier than it is here! And there were so many people I didn’t feel at all afraid.”

“Very good, Master Nils! That magnificent palace, with its splendid company, its turmoil, torches, feasting and revelry, has turned your head for you, I’m afraid. For my part, it doesn’t suit my taste to spend the night at a ball, and wait until day for the chance of sharing a room with four or five young fools, intoxicated, and perhaps quarrelsome. I like to eat little, but often and quietly, to sleep only a few hours, but without being disturbed. Besides, I did not come here to amuse myself.

I have important business to transact for the baron, and I must have my room, my table, my writing-desk, and a little silence. The baron is to blame, I must say, for allowing himself to forget, amid his festivities and entertainments, that I am no longer a young student, eager for music and dancing. He ought to have had this room prepared for me, or some other, in a quiet place, out of the reach of importunate visitors. When I saw the amazement of the servants at my arrival, and their inability to provide me with suitable quarters, it would have taken very little to make me return to Falun. But I was afraid of the snow-storm, and then Loki was too warm; I remembered, happily, that there was a haunted room at old Stollborg that every one was afraid of, and which, consequently, was never used. Here we are, and we are very well off. To-morrow, Nils, you must give a thorough dusting. I like neatness, for my part."

"Yes, Monsieur Goeffle, I will tell Ulph. I am not tall enough to reach so high."

"So I see. Well, we will tell Ulph."

"Why do they call this the bear-room, Monsieur Goeffle?"

"It is a name like any other," replied the lawyer, who was arranging his papers in the drawer of the table, and who did not think it worth while to explain the shield to master Nils.

Soon, however, he noticed that the child's terror had redoubled.

"What is the matter?" he said impatiently. "You do nothing but follow me about, and don't give me the least assistance."

"I am afraid of the bear," replied the courageous Nils. "At Falun you were speaking with the pastor about the great bear. I could understand."

"I was speaking about the great bear! What do you mean? Oh yes, you are right! The pastor is something of an astronomer, and we were saying—take courage, my brave youth—we were talking about the great bear up in the sky."

"Oh! the great bear is up in the sky!" cried Nils, re-

covering his spirits. "Then it is not here? It will not come into this room?"

"No," said the lawyer, laughing; "it is too far away, too high up! If it should try to come down it would break its paws. Now, then, you are no longer afraid?"

"Oh no! I am not afraid now! But what if it should tumble down?"

"Bah! It is fastened firmly by seven large diamond nails!"

"Was it the good God who nailed it up there because it was so wicked?"

"Probably! Are you quite sure now that you are not afraid?"

"Oh yes!" said Nils, with a gesture of profound incredulity.

"Go and look for Ulph, then, and tell him —"

"But, M. Goefle, you spoke also about the Snow Man!"

"So we did! You listen to everything that is said, it seems. That is very agreeable."

"Oh yes, monsieur!" replied Nils, ingenuously; "I listen to everything."

"And what is the Snow Man, in your opinion?"

"I don't know. The pastor whispered to you, laughing: 'So you are going to see the Snow Man?'"

"He was talking, I suppose, about some mountain that has that name."

"Oh, no indeed! For you said: 'Does he walk as straight as ever?' and the pastor said: 'He is always hunting on his lake.' Oh, I understand Swedish just as well as Dalecarlian!"

"And what do you think from that?"

"Oh, that there is a great tall snow man who walks on the lake we have just come over."

"Exactly! And who is always followed by a great bear! You have some imagination, child! Is the bear white, or black?"

"I don't know, Monsieur Goefle."

"We ought to know about that, though, before de-

ciding to take supper in this room. What if they should come and sit down at the table with us?"

Nils saw plainly that M. Goeffe was joking, and he began to laugh. The lawyer was congratulating himself upon his method of curing children of fear, when the little fellow, who had suddenly become serious again, said:

"Monsieur Goeffe, let us go away from here. This is a very ugly place."

"This is too much!" cried the lawyer, pettishly. "What plagues children are! I am good enough to explain to my young gentleman that the bear is a constellation, and he is more frightened than ever."

Nils, seeing that his master was angry, began to cry. He was a spoiled child, yet timid. M. Goeffe, who was thoroughly good-hearted, imagined, and took pleasure in saying, that he did not like children, and that if anything could console him for not having married at a proper age, it was the intellectual freedom that is enjoyed by those who have no children to take care of and be responsible for. The keen sensibility with which he was endowed, however, which his stirring and active professional life had developed without his knowledge, made it impossible for him to endure the tears and complaints of the weak. Accordingly he tried to console and encourage his little valet, at the very same time that he was grumbling at his folly, and while persisting in his passion for intellectual and subtle discussions, a style of argument that gains cases when you are trying to persuade men, but which is almost sure to lose them when you are dealing with children. He even went so far as to promise that he would run the great bear through the body with his sword, if it should come to the door of the room, rather than allow it to enter.

M. Goeffe excused himself the more readily for his absurd condescension, as he called it, because he found that a witty account of his evening at Stollborg, with which he proposed to entertain his friends at Gevala, was involuntarily taking form in his mind.

In the meanwhile Ulph did not return. That he would

require some time to get up a supper in M. Stenson's modest establishment, the lawyer was prepared to anticipate ; but he did not bring back the light, and this was an unpardonable piece of forgetfulness.

The end of the candle was going out in the lantern, and the lawyer, who prided himself upon his white hands and irreproachable ruffles, dared not touch this villanous utensil to light himself about the room. He was obliged to submit to this disagreeable necessity, however, in order to go into the adjoining apartment ; he wanted to search the closet, whose key Ulph had given him, and which he hoped might contain some provisions or pieces of candle. Nils followed, holding him softly by the flap of the coat.

These two rooms which M. Goeffle proposed to occupy, were separated from each other by an unusually thick wall, and two solid doors. The lawyer was well acquainted with the locality, but it was so long since his business had required him to visit the interior of the building, that he had some difficulty in finding the first of the two doors. He looked for it opposite the outer entrance, and he was right ; but instead of being on a straight line with it, it was a little to the left. Like the secret door that Cristiano had accidentally discovered under the staircase, and whose existence had never been suspected either by the doctor or Ulphilas, it was entirely concealed in the wainscot. There was no affectation of mystery, however, in this style of door, closing perfectly without any visible lock ; this peculiarity was merely the result of very careful joinery work, which becomes almost an art in cold countries.

M. Goeffle did not find it necessary to look into the closet, after he had once taken possession of the double-bedded room. Glancing at the mantle-piece, he saw a pair of heavy candlesticks with three branches, each of them holding three wax candles. It was time ; the end of the candle was expiring in the lantern.

"Since there is no danger of our being left in the dark," said M. Goeffle to the child, "we may as well make our arrangements here at once. Light the fire, and I will take the bed-clothes from the closet."

The bed-clothes were laid upon the beds before Nils had succeeded in doing anything more than fill the room with smoke. When it was time to make the beds, which were enormous, he could think of nothing better than climbing up on top of them, so as to reach the middle of the bolster. M. Goefle was very much inclined to get angry, but since this would only have been a signal for tears, he resigned himself to his fate, and made not only his own bed, but that also of his little valet.

Although he had never done any work of the kind, he was succeeding very creditably, when a fearful noise in the bear-room (the doors between the two rooms had been left open) interrupted him. It was a sort of wild, unearthly, and yet absurd yell. Nils tumbled down on his hands and knees, and considered it prudent to hide under the bed, while M. Goefle, with staring eyes and open mouth, asked himself, without any alarm, but with great surprise, what could be the meaning of such a sere-nade.

"If, as I firmly believe," he thought, "it is some practical joker who wants to frighten me, he imitates the growling of the bear in a singular manner. The voice of the ass he really does reproduce, and with remarkable skill; but does he take me for a Laplander, and imagine that I have never heard an ass bray? Come, come, Nils," he continued, looking for his little valet, "there is no magic here; let us go and see what the matter is."

Nils would have perished rather than stir, or even answer; and M. Goefle, not knowing what had become of him, went in alone to reconnoitre.

He was not a little surprised to find himself, in the middle of the bear-room, face to face with a veritable ass, and a fine one too (he had never seen its equal in Sweden), with such an honest countenance, that it was impossible to give him an unkind reception, or to take his visit in bad part.

"Well, my poor friend," said Monsieur Goefle, laughing, "where do you come from? What are you doing in this country, and what request did you just make of me?"

If Jean had had the gift of human speech, he would have replied that he had taken a good nap, while confidently awaiting his master's return, in his hiding-place under the staircase, where no one had thought of looking; but that, finding that his master did not return, and beginning to feel very hungry, he had lost patience, and, undoing the rope, which was not well tied, had come to ask M. Goeffe for some supper.

The latter easily guessed what he wanted, but he could not understand why Ulph, whom he supposed in trusted with the care of this ass, should have given him the haunted chamber of Stollborg for a stable. He thought of a world of things. As this animal is a great rarity in cold countries, the baron, who had a team of reindeer as well (another rarity in this region, too cold for the ass and not cold enough for the reindeer), probably valued him very highly, and had ordered the overseer of the old chateau to take care of him, and keep him in a warm place.

"That accounts for the fire in the stove," said M. Goeffe to himself; "but I can't understand why Ulph, instead of telling the simple truth, should have pretended to believe the room haunted. Perhaps he was ordered to fit up one of the stables for the occasion, and not having done so, wished to conceal his negligence; he hoped, no doubt, that I would be disgusted with the room, or would not notice the presence of this strange companion. Anyhow," M. Goeffe added, turning gayly to Jean, whose face amused him, "I beg your pardon, my poor ass, but I don't feel inclined to keep you so near me. You have a remarkably good voice, and I don't sleep soundly. I am going to take you to Loki, who will be a warm, comfortable companion; and, for to-night, you will have to share his supper and straw. Come, Nils, come, my child; you must light me to the stable."

Receiving no reply, M. Goeffe was obliged to return to the guard-room and find the child's hiding place; pulling him out by one leg, he carried him back and seated him, whether he would or not, upon the back of the ass. At first, Master Nils, thinking that he was astride the

imaginary bear, uttered piercing cries. He had never seen an ass, and was as much alarmed by Jean's long ears as he would have been by the horns of the devil; but gradually the tranquillity and gentleness of the poor beast restored his courage. M. Goefle gave him the candlestick with three branches; he himself led the ass by the halter, and, leaving the tower, they all three turned into the wooden gallery, with its mossy shed, that surrounded the snow-covered court, and proceeded towards the stable.

At this very moment, Ulph came out of the pavilion in which his uncle lived, and proceeded towards the tower, with a lantern in one hand, and in the other a large basket-full of articles for setting the lawyer's table. Ulph now was as eager to return to the bear-room as, a little while before, he had been unwilling to enter it. This is what had happened to him.

Like a true Swede, Ulph was all kindness and hospitality; but since he had been living in the gloomy chateau of Stollborg, with his deaf and melancholy uncle, the poor fellow had become so superstitious and cowardly that he never failed to lock himself up in his room as soon as the sun went down, with the firm resolution of not admitting any suspicious characters after that hour, but of leaving them rather to perish in the ice and snow. If the outer door of the chateau had not been broken open by Puffo's vigorous fist, and if Ulph had not recognized the lawyer's voice in the court, the respectable doctor of laws would certainly have been obliged to return to the new chateau, in spite of his dread of its noise and confusion.

After introducing him into the tower, Ulph became a little more tranquil. He even said to himself that it was all for the best. If M. Goefle wanted to defy the devil it was his own business, and it was far better to have to admit him than to be obliged to reconduct him to the new chateau; an order that would have entailed upon the unfortunate guide the terrible necessity of returning alone over a lake peopled with frightful goblins. The old overseer of Stollborg was delicate, chilly, and accustomed

to retire early. Happily, he had already shut himself up in his pavilion, which stood at the end of a small inner court, and which had no view of the outer court, as all its windows overlooked the lake. Whether asleep or not, therefore, it was not at all likely that he would suspect the presence of his guest before the next morning. After reflecting deeply, Ulph resolved not to disturb him, and to do his best to prepare M. Goeffe a good supper. Sten himself was very frugal, but he was treated with great consideration by his master, the Baron de Waldemora (proprietor both of the new chateau and the old tower), who, once for all, had given his new steward the strictest orders to provide liberally for this old and faithful servant of his house.

Ulph loved good living, and seeing that his uncle sent back, out of prudence and economy, the superfluous provisions brought from the new chateau, he made arrangements, without telling him anything about it, to receive everything himself. He concealed his gastronomic wealth in a certain mysterious corner of the kitchen, and kept his bottles of old wine, which must have been exceedingly valuable in a country where the vine is a hot-house plant, piled up behind a row of empty hogsheads, in a certain little cellar in the rock, very cool in summer and very warm in winter.

Ulph was not covetous; he was an honest fellow, who would not upon any account have made money out of the baron's presents. He was good-hearted too, and, whenever he could keep a friend with him, he invited him in a mysterious manner to share his precious bottles; drinking alone is sad, and he was only too happy to be able to enjoy them in company. But it was so well established that the chateau was haunted, not by a bear, as Nils imagined, but by an unhappy ghost, that poor Ulph could not persuade a single boon companion to stop with him a moment after sunset. To keep up his courage, he was obliged to finish his bottles himself; and it was at such times that he beheld the wicked *trolls* and *stroemkarls*, who try to lead their victims to waterfalls, and throw them in. It was probably to avoid being tempted to fol-

low them, that the judicious Ulphilas drank until he had entirely lost the use of his legs. There were a number of free-thinkers and cosmopolites who did not believe in anything, among the baron's numerous suite of servants, but Stenson hated them all more or less, and his nephew Ulphilas shared his antipathies.

Ulphilas Stenson, therefore, had plenty of materials for the doctor's supper, and he was not a bad hand at frying and roasting. After all, the lawyer's gayety had inspirited him a little, and he was looking forward to having a pleasant chat while waiting on the table, when his cheerful ideas were suddenly disturbed by strange sounds. He imagined that he heard a stealthy rustling in the thick walls, a creaking in the wainscots! Twenty times the frying-pan fell from his hand, and at one moment he was so sure that his sighs of terror were repeated behind him by a mocking echo, that he remained for three good minutes without daring to breathe, and far less to turn around.

This was what made him so slow in preparing this much-desired repast. At last, when he had finished his work after a fashion, he went down into the cellar to get some wine. There new agonies awaited him. Just as he was about leaving this sanctuary with a sufficient load, a tall black figure glided before him. His lantern went out, and the same mysterious steps that had already frightened him almost out of his wits, went rapidly up the cellar stairs. Ulph came very near fainting; but, recovering his courage, he returned to the kitchen, and leaving his saucepans simmering on the stove, resolved, under the pretence of setting the table, to go and see whether M. Goeffe would not cure him of his terror.

It was at this very moment, as he was coming along the wooden gallery with his useful load, that he met face to face a whimsical apparition. There before him he beheld the doctor of laws in his night-cap, leading by the halter a strange, monstrous animal (like a true Dalecarlian peasant of those days, Ulph had never seen the ass, and perhaps had never heard of it), while upon this animal, whose long ears cast gigantic shadows along the

gallery, rode a little red devil bearing a triple flame; the very imp whom M. Goefle had wished to pass off as his valet, but who could only be the kobold in person, the familiar demon whom he had boasted of having in his service.

This was too much for poor Ulph. He respected kobolds, but he did not want to see them. His grasp failed; he set his basket on the ground, and, turning short round, fled, and shut himself up in his room, swearing by his eternal salvation that he would not come out again that night, even although the lawyer should die of hunger and the devil should eat up his supper.

It was all in vain that M. Goefle called. He received no reply, and after conducting the ass to the stable, he took up the abandoned basket and returned to set the table, with Nils's help, in the bear-room.

"Well," he said, "travellers must be philosophical. Here are glasses, dishes and napkins, so we will hope that that lunatic will provide us with some food as well. We shall have to wait his good pleasure, since there is no means of doing otherwise; and, in the meanwhile, we can open these bottles, which look promising."

Nils set the table quite neatly, the fire blazed merrily in the stove, and Monsieur Goefle had quite recovered his natural good-humor, when the child began tumbling about in a languid, helpless way, which showed that he had suddenly become sleepy.

"Look out there!" cried the lawyer; "wake up! You have to eat yet; you must be hungry."

"Oh yes! Monsieur Goefle," replied the child; "but I want to sleep so much! I can never wait all the while until your supper is brought and you have done eating. Give me a little of this bread and blackberry jam; then I will be stronger, and will wait upon you."

M. Goefle himself opened the pot of sweetmeats, and Nils seated himself unceremoniously in the place intended for his master, while the latter warmed his feet, which had been chilled by their expedition to the stable. M. Goefle was as active in imagination as fluent in speech. When there was no opportunity for talking, his

mind kept busily at work, or he abandoned himself to agreeable reveries. In a little while he began to feel the pangs of hunger again, and turned to see whether Ugh had returned, at last, with some more solid dish than symposiums; but he only saw little Nils fast asleep, with his head on the table and his nose in the plate.

"Come, come!" he said, shaking him: "now that you have had something to eat, you must keep awake. I want you to wait upon me. Go and see whether Ugh—"

It was useless for M. Goefie to finish. Nils was overcome by the irresistible sleep of childhood. He got up, but his eyes were vacant, and he staggered like a drunken man. The lawyer really pitied him.

"Well, go to bed," he said, "since you are good for nothing."

Nils turned to go to the guard-room, but stopped at the door, and, leaning against it, fell fast asleep standing. He had to be carried to bed. Then there was another trouble. The little man really could not take off his gaiters. M. Goefie had to take off his valet's gaiters, and this was not an easy task, for the shoes were tight, and the child's legs were swollen with fatigue.

When he was going to hoist him into his bed, he saw that the little rascal had already crept in, all dressed.

"The devil take you!" he said: "do you suppose I gave you those beautiful new clothes to sleep in? Get up and undress yourself: it is the least you can do."

He pulled him out of bed, whether he wished it or not, but the child made useless efforts to unbutton himself. Anna Gertrude, delighted to have still swing in dressing him up like a little valet before introducing him to his master, had had his off-skin small clothes and his red cloth vest made so tight, that they drew him like wax. M. Goefie himself could scarcely pull them off. While thus engaged, he had to take him upon his knees before the fire, for the child was shivering with cold. It was useless for him to get angry, and censure Gertrude for giving him such a servant: he could not be so inhuman as to let him freeze. And then Nils disarmed him by his

pretty ways. At every word of reproach, he would reply artlessly:

"You will see to-morrow, Monsieur Goefle: I will do all that you tell me, and then I will love you so much!"

"That will always be the way," replied the good lawyer, shaking him a little. "I prefer to be rather less loved and a little better waited on."

At last Nils was in bed, and M. Goefle turned to go in quest of his problematical supper, when the child called him back unceremoniously, and said in a reproachful voice:

"Wait, monsieur; you are not going to leave me all alone!"

"What more?" cried the doctor of laws. "Do you want company to sleep?"

"But, Monsieur Goefle, I never slept alone in my room at the pastor's house; and here, above all, where I am so afraid. Oh! stop — stop; if you are going to leave me, I had rather sleep on the floor in the room where you are."

Wide awake now as a cat, Nils jumped out of bed, and started to follow his master into the bear-room, in his shirt. M. Goefle lost all patience. He scolded; Nils took to crying again. He was going to shut him up. Nils began to howl. The doctor of laws formed an heroic determination.

"Since I have been so foolish," he said, "as to suppose that a child ten years old was fourteen, and to imagine that Gertrude had a grain of common sense in her brain, I must pay the penalty. Five minutes' patience and this young rogue will be fast asleep; while, if I excite him by my opposition, God only knows how long I shall have to hear him groaning or braying."

He went into the bear-room to get one of his bundles of papers, not without cursing the child, who followed with naked feet, and would scarcely give him time to find his spectacles; and then sat down before the fire in the guard-room, with the doors shut, as it was not very warm. After asking Nils ironically whether he did not want to be sung to sleep, he buried himself in his dusty

papers, and forgot all about the supper, which did not arrive, and the child, who was snoring with all his might.

II.

BUT what was Cristiano about while M. Goeffe was meeting with all these adventures? The reader has probably guessed that the mocking goblin wandering about poor Ulph in kitchen and cellar was our adventurer in person, in pursuit of his supper. Ulph's terrors and agonies enabled him to carry off the most portable dishes in the kitchen, almost under his nose. In the cellar he was less fortunate. On blowing out the coward's light, he had found himself in such utter darkness that he was afraid of being shut up fasting in this subterranean vault. He had hastened, therefore, to retrace his steps, while consoling himself with the thought that he could seize the bottles which Ulph would be sure to bring up, at a more favorable moment.

The adventurer had lost some little time in cautiously exploring the secret passage of the bear-room, which we shall describe rather later; escaping from it with some difficulty, he introduced himself secretly into M. Sten-son's pavilion, and so had not been in a position to notice M. Goeffe's arrival. He thought, therefore, that the supper was being prepared for the old overseer. Before returning to his self-selected lodging, he had still to find some supper for his ass, and for several moments after Ulph's final fit of terror, he was wandering about in the small court adjoining the outer enclosure; hence he lost the diverting spectacle of M. Goeffe in his night-cap, leading the ass in triumph to the stable, with the help of his kobold in red livery. As he explored the old building in every direction, and opened all the doors that were not firmly bolted, Cristiano came at last to the stable, where he was delighted to see Master Jean eating his supper with a good appetite, and trampling upon a

thick litter of dry moss, in company with a handsome black horse, who seemed to make him very welcome.

"Really, beasts are sometimes more reasonable and more hospitable than men," thought Cristiano, caressing the noble animal. "Since we have been travelling in this cold country, Jean has been regarded with amazement, fear, or repugnance, in the various villages and peasants' huts where we have stopped, and I myself, in spite of the affable manners of the people of this country, have fallen into a strange den of gloomy or absent-minded beings, where I am obliged to go marauding, like a soldier on a campaign. This good horse, on the contrary, makes room for Jean in his stall, without asking him the meaning of his long ears, and treats him from the start as an equal. Well, Jean, good-night, my friend! If I should ask you who had brought you here and supplied your wants to your heart's desire, you would not perhaps have the goodness to reply; and I should suppose, if I did not see that some one had tied you by your halter, that you had been sensible enough to come of your own accord. Well, anyhow I will follow your example, and go and take my supper without thinking of the morrow."

Cristiano shut the stable-door and returned to the bear-room, where he was agreeably surprised to find the table set with handsome dishes, heavy silver, and a white table-cloth, soiled only by a few sweetmeat stains around Nils's plate.

"Hallo!" cried the adventurer, gayly, "these good people have finished, or rather they have begun with the desert! But who the devil has been here in my absence? Puffo would not have been neat enough to set the table; that is not at all his style in travelling. Besides, he must have gone to the new chateau to seek his fortune, or I should have met him while exploring the old one. In fact, I never expected to receive any assistance from that fellow. If he has found a comfortable place for himself in some kitchen, no matter where, he will be sure to forget all about me, and I was quite right to take care of myself. But no matter, if he should happen to return

here to sleep, the poor devil must not freeze at the door of the chateau."

Cristiano went and opened the door of the court, which Ulph, after M. Goefle's arrival, had taken pains to fasten, and returned firmly resolved to have his supper, no matter with whom, by fair means or foul.

"I have a right to it," he continued; "the dishes are empty, and the food I bring fills them handsomely. If I have a companion here, and he proves good-natured, we will join forces; otherwise we will see which of the two is to turn the other out of doors."

While talking in this way, Cristiano went to see whether his baggage had been disturbed. He found it in the corner where he had left it, and where it had not been noticed. He then examined M. Goefle's trunk, valise and effects; his clothes scattered about upon the chairs (the linen carefully folded to be laid away in a closet, and the coats stretched over the backs of the chairs to get smooth); and, last of all, the empty valise, upon the cover of which he read these words:—*M. Thormund Goefle, Advocate, Gevala; Doctor of Law, Faculty of Lund.*

"An advocate!" thought the adventurer. "Well, he will talk, anyhow! A lawyer must always have a little wit and talent. He may prove an agreeable companion if he is sensible enough not to judge a man by his coat. But where can he be hidden? He is some one, I suppose, invited to the festivities at the Chateau de Waldemora, who, like myself, found the house full, or who fancied stopping in this romantic manor. Or he may be the business man of the rich baron, for it is scarcely likely that citizens are admitted into the society of the nobles in this country of castes and prejudices. It is nothing to me! The lawyer has certainly gone out, in any event. He may be chatting with the old overseer, or perhaps he is in the double-bedded room that we were told about, although I see no signs of a door. Shall I look for him? Who knows that he has not gone to bed? Yes, that is most probable. The people here wished to wait upon him, but he declined everything; contenting himself with sweetmeats, and longing only for his bed. May he sleep

in peace, the worthy man ! For my part, I shall do very well in this large arm-chair, and if I am cold — hallo ! here is a magnificent cloak lined with fur, and a sable travelling cap, that will protect body and ears from the frost. Let me see whether they will be comfortable ! Yes, very indeed,” thought Cristiano, throwing the cloak over his shoulders, and donning the cap ; “and that is lucky for me ! What a strange puzzle life is ! When I think that I have followed a respectable profession for ten years, and yet have not a good cloak to cover my poor body, now that I am lost in the polar regions, I can scarcely believe my senses ! ”

Cristiano had already placed his booty, consisting of an appetizing Hamburg tongue, a bear’s leg smoked to perfection, and a superb piece of smoked and salted salmon, upon the table.

He was just going to throw off the doctor’s travelling suit so as to eat more at his leisure, when he thought he heard the tinkling of bells passing under the only window of the bear-room. This window, which was opposite the stove, was large, and had a double sash, the universal practice in all comfortable dwellings, whether ancient or modern, in northern countries. However, the outside sash showed how Stollborg had been neglected. Almost all the glass panes were broken, and, as the wind had ceased, you could hear distinctly the noises from the outside ; the masses of recently fallen snow breaking off from the old solid beds and sinking with a dull, mysterious boom down the perpendicular rocks, the distant shouts proceeding from the farm on the shore of the lake, and the melancholy howling of the dogs, saluting with unintelligible maledictions the red disk of the rising moon.

Cristiano, who felt curious to see the sleigh which was cutting a path over the frozen lake so near his refuge, opened the inner sash and thrust his head through one of the broken panes. He saw distinctly a fantastic vision gliding along at the foot of the rock. Two magnificent white horses, driven by a bearded coachman dressed like a Russian, were drawing lightly a sleigh that flashed and glittered with a shimmering light, like a pre-

ious stone. The lantern on this elegant vehicle was unusually high, and looked like a star swept along by a whirlwind, or a will-o'-the-wisp furiously chasing the sleigh. Its light, thrown forward by a reflector of red gold, cast warm gleams across the blue moonlight on the snow, and painted with rainbow hues the vapor streaming from the nostrils and sides of the horses. Nothing could have been more graceful and poetic than this wheelless car, which might have been that of the fairy of the lake, passing like a dream under Cristiano's dazzled eyes. It is true that he had seen sleighs of all kinds, from the most luxurious to the most simple, in passing through Stockholm and other cities of the country, but none of them had seemed to him so picturesque and so singular as the one now stopping at the foot of the rock. For, he could no longer doubt it, a new visitor, and this time an opulent one, was coming to take possession of Stollborg, or to reconnoitre that silent retreat.

"The sleigh has afforded me a beautiful spectacle," thought Cristiano; "but the devil take those who are in it! Here, I wager, is another interruption to the peaceful supper I was promising myself."

The rash imprecation died upon his lips! A sweet and really melodious voice, a woman's voice, which, according to Cristiano, could only belong to a charming woman, proceeded from the sleigh. The voice, speaking in the dialect of the province, which he did not understand, made this remark:

"Do you think, Peterson, that your horses can ascend to the door of the old chateau?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," replied the large coachman, muffled up in furs, "this evening's snow will make it a little troublesome, but others have been before us already. I see the fresh tracks. Don't be afraid. We will get there."

The approach to Stollborg, which M. Goeffe had called a *little rock*, was an actual natural staircase, consisting of layers of schistose rock of unequal thickness. In summer it would have been enough to disable horses and carriages; but winter in the north renders every road practicable.

and every traveller intrepid. A thick bed of frozen snow, solid and smooth as marble, fills up all hollows, and levels all inequalities. The horses, shod for the purpose, climb dangerous heights, and descend boldly the most precipitous declivities; sleighs are not often upset, and accidents, when they do occur, are seldom dangerous. In a few moments this one stopped at the door of the little chateau.

"You must ring cautiously," said the sweet voice to the coachman; "you know, Peterson, that I don't want to be seen by the old steward, who, perhaps, tells everything that happens to his master."

"Oh, he is so deaf!" replied the coachman, jumping to the ground. "Ulph wont say a word, for he is my friend; provided always that he chooses to open the door. He is a little timid at night, and no wonder, the chateau —"

Peterson was probably going to tell about the ghosts of Stollborg, but he did not have time to continue. The door opened as if of itself, and Cristiano, as well muffled up as the coachman, thanks to the lawyer's cloak and fur cap, appeared at the threshold.

"No matter, here he is," said the sweet voice. "Stand aside, Peterson, and don't forget to take off the bells from your horses; I begged you so particularly to attend to it. Don't be impatient, poor fellow, I won't keep you waiting long."

"Take your time, mademoiselle," replied the devoted servant, wiping the icicles from his beard, "it is very mild this evening."

Cristiano did not understand a word of this dialogue, but he listened with none the less delight to the sweet voice, and he offered his arm to a little lady so well wrapped up in ermine, that she looked like a flake of snow rather than a human being. She spoke to him at once, but still in Dalecarlian, so that he could not guess what she said, although it was evident from her intonation, sweet as it was, that she was giving him some orders. She mistook him for the keeper of old Stollborg; and as the voice of command, in all countries alike, requires no other answer than submissive gestures, Cristiano did very well, without understanding and replying, during his short

walk with the little lady, whom he conducted along the wooden gallery leading from the door of the court to that of the donjon.

In taking her to the bear-room, Cristiano obeyed instinctively his natural hospitality, without knowing whether she would thank him for his kindness. In the same way he had been led instinctively to go and meet her by curiosity, and perhaps also a sentiment of gallantry, which was still all-powerful at this epoch, over men of all ages and classes.

The young lady, who had followed her guide unsuspectingly, started with surprise when she found herself in the famous room.

"Is this the bear-room?" she said, rather anxiously; "I have never been here."

Cristiano, who did not understand a word, made no reply; and looking at him by the light of the only candle placed upon the table, she cried, in Swedish:

"Good heavens! This is not Ulphilas! To whom have I the honor of speaking? Can it be M. Goefle in person?"

The young man understood and spoke Swedish remarkably well. He remembered instantly the name upon the lawyer's valise, and saw — thanks to the disguise of his cloak — that he would be able to amuse himself, if only for a moment, by playing his part. Singular circumstances, that we shall learn about in due time, had given him perfect command of the Swedish language; but he was a stranger in the country. Utterly isolated, and bound by no ties to any human being, he was not obliged to be circumspect in his behavior, and considered it only natural to divert himself whenever he had a chance. He replied boldly, therefore, at a venture:

"Yes, madame, I am Monsieur Goefle, Doctor of Laws of the Faculty of Lund, practising law at Gevala."

As he spoke, he laid his hand upon a spectacle-case containing a pair of green spectacles, which the lawyer was in the habit of wearing when he travelled, to protect his eyes from the fatiguing glare of the snow. Delighted with this discovery, which the special providence

that watches over children and hair-brained mad-caps seemed to have thrust under his very nose, he put them on, and felt perfectly disguised.

"Ah, monsieur," said the unknown, "I ask a thousand pardons, but I did not see you. I have never had the pleasure of meeting you, and I took you for the keeper of Stollborg. You must have laughed to hear me ordering him to inform you that I requested a moment's interview, and promising him a fee for so doing."

Cristiano bowed respectfully.

"Will you allow me, then," resumed the unknown, "to converse with you about an affair — a little embarrassing — a little delicate? —"

These two words delighted the adventurer to such a degree, that he forgot all about his intense momentary vexation at having his supper delayed by this unexpected visit, and only thought how much he should like to see the face of his visitor, which was buried in her ermine hood.

"I am ready to listen to you," he said, in a grave tone; "a lawyer is a confessor. But are you not afraid, if you keep on your cloak, that you will catch cold when you go out?"

"No," said the unknown, accepting the arm-chair which her host offered her, "I am a true mountaineer: I never catch cold."

She added artlessly:

"Besides, you will think, perhaps, that I am not suitably attired for the conference that I have just solicited with a dignified and respectable person like you, Monsieur Goeffle; I am in ball-dress."

"Good gracious!" cried Cristiano, thoughtlessly; "I am not a ferocious old Lutheran! A ball-dress does not shock me at all; above all, when it is worn by a pretty person."

"You are very gallant, Monsieur Goeffle; but I don't know that I am pretty and well-dressed; I do know, however, that I ought not to hide my face from you, for any distrust upon my part would be an insult to your

loyalty, to which, in requesting your advice and protection, I have just made appeal."

The unknown threw back her hood, and Cristiano saw the most charming head imaginable. It was a pure Swedish type, eyes of a true sapphire blue, quantities of light golden hair of extreme fineness, one of those exquisitely pure and fresh complexions which are never seen in equal perfection among other races; and, just visible through the half open pelisse, a slender neck, shoulders of snow, and a slight, flexible form. This sweet vision was chaste as infancy, for the little visitor was only sixteen years old, and had not done growing.

Cristiano did not pride himself upon his austerity; he was a man of his time, but he was superior to the hazardous career into which he had been thrown by circumstances. He was a person of intelligence and natural delicacy. He gazed with quiet friendliness upon this Rose of the North; and, if he had had any treacherous idea in drawing her into this bear's den, it was quickly replaced by the anticipation of an adventure which, however gay and romantic, could not fail to be as honest as the amiable and frank countenance of his young guest.

"Monsieur Goeffe," resumed the latter, encouraged by the respectful attitude of the pretended lawyer, "now that you have seen my face, which I hope is not that of a wicked person, I must tell you my name. You will know it perfectly well. But it distresses me to see you standing, when I am seated upon the only arm-chair in the room. I know the respect that is due to a man of your worth — I was going to say of your age, for I have always thought (I don't know why) that you were very old; while, on the contrary, you seem younger than the baron."

"You flatter me," replied Cristiano, pulling his furred cap, with its ear-pieces, down over his eyes and cheeks; "I am old, very old! It is only the tip of my nose that can appear young, and you must excuse me for not uncovering in your presence. Your visit surprised me; I had taken off my wig, and must hide my bald crown as I can."

"Don't speak of it, Monsieur Goeffe, and please to sit down."

"With your permission I will remain standing near the stove, on account of my gout, which pains me," replied Cristiano, who was standing with his head in the shadow, while the feeble light of the only candle was thrown entirely upon his visitor. "To whom have I the honor —"

"Yes, yes," she replied eagerly. "Oh! you know me well, although you have never seen me. I am Margaret."

"Indeed!" cried Cristiano, in a tone that signified, "I know no more than I did before."

Happily, the young girl was impatient to explain herself.

"Yes, yes," she replied, "Margaret Elveda, the niece of your client."

"Ah, the niece of my client —"

"Countess Elveda, sister of my father, the colonel, who was the friend of the unhappy baron!"

"The unhappy baron —"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* Baron Adelstan, whose name I cannot pronounce without emotion in this room, who was assassinated by the miners of Falun — or by some one else! for, after all, monsieur, who knows? Are you very certain that it was done by the workmen of the mine?"

"As to that, mademoiselle, I cannot say; if any one has a right to swear upon his honor that he does not know anything about it, it is your humble servant," replied Cristiano, in an impressive tone, that seemed forcibly to strike the young girl, who gave his words her own interpretation.

"Oh, Monsieur Goeffe," she said earnestly, "I was perfectly sure that you shared my suspicions. No, nothing will ever persuade me that all these tragic deaths that were talked about, and which are still talked about, in whispers — but are we quite alone? can no one overhear us? This is such a serious matter, Monsieur Goeffe!"

"In fact it seems serious," thought Cristiano, assuming the tottering gait of an old man, and going to see whether the outside door was shut; "the only trouble is that I don't understand it all."

He glanced around the room, but failed, as before, to notice the door of the guard-chamber, which was closed between M. Goefle and our two friends.

"Well, monsieur," resumed the young lady, "can you believe that my aunt wants to make me marry a man whom I cannot help regarding as the assassin of his family?"

As Cristiano knew nothing at all about the facts in question, he tried to draw out an explanation by chiming in with the views of his new client.

"Your aunt must be a mad-woman," he said, a little cavalierly, "or something worse."

"Excuse me, Monsieur Goefle, she is my aunt, and it is my duty to respect her! I only accuse her of being blind or prejudiced."

"Blindness and prejudice be it then; it is really a matter of no importance. What I see most clearly is, that she is trying to force your inclination."

"Oh! there is no doubt about that, for I have a horror of the baron! Did she not tell you so?"

"Quite the contrary! I supposed —"

"Oh, Monsieur Goefle, how could you suppose that I, at my age, would feel the least liking for a man fifty-five years old?"

"What! Is the person they want you to marry fifty-five years old into the bargain?"

"You are only pretending to be in doubt, Monsieur Goefle! You cannot help knowing his age; you are his lawyer, and, it is said, also his devoted friend — but I don't believe that at all."

"The deuce! You are right. May I be hung if I care a fig for him! But what is the name of the gentleman?"

"The baron? You do not know whom I am talking of?"

"How should I? There are so many barons in the world."

"But my aunt has told you —"

"A truce to what she has told me! How can I remember all that your aunt says? She doesn't know her own mind, perhaps."

"Oh, pardon me; she knows it only too well! She has a will of iron. She must have told you about her plans, for she declares that you approve them."

"I approve of sacrificing a charming child like you to a dotard?"

"There now, you see that you know the baron's age perfectly well."

"But once again, what baron do you mean?"

"What baron? Is it possible that it can be necessary for me to mention the Snow Man?"

"Indeed! The Snow Man? Very well, I must confess that I am no wiser than I was before."

"How, Monsieur Goeffe, you do not know the surname of the most powerful, the richest, and at the same time the most wicked and hateful of your clients, the Baron Olaus de Waldemora?"

"What, the proprietor of this chateau?"

"Certainly, and of the new chateau on the other shore of the lake; the owner, moreover, of innumerable iron mines, lead mines, and alum mines, and of several valleys, forests and mountains, without referring to his fields, cattle, farms and lakes; the seigneur, in a word, of a good tenth part of Dalecarlia. It is because of his vast possessions that my aunt is at me, from morning until night, to make me forget that he is old, sickly, and perhaps burdened with crimes."

"Good God!" cried Cristiano, in amazement, "I have accepted the hospitality of an agreeable person!"

"You are laughing at me, Monsieur Goeffe! You don't believe in his guilt, and you were jesting when you said just now—"

"All that I said I am ready to repeat. But I should like to know of what crimes you accuse my host?"

"I don't accuse him; public rumor has accustomed me to regard him as the assassin of his father, his brother, and his sister-in-law, the unhappy Hilda—"

"Nothing more than that?"

"You know what is said, Monsieur Goeffe; you were commissioned, were you not? — Oh, no, it must have been your father, who was Baron Olaus's lawyer at that time. The baron brought forward deeds of some sort. Nothing could ever be proved against him; but the truth was never known, and never will be known, — at least until the dead come from the tomb to tell it."

"That sometimes happens," replied Cristiano, smiling.

"Really, do you believe? —"

"Oh, that is one of our professional phrases, when an unexpected proof is discovered, you know — a lost letter, a chance word, long forgotten."

"Yes, I know, but nothing was ever found, and for fifteen or twenty years the whole thing has been buried in silence and forgetfulness. Baron Olaus was suspected and hated at first, but he has succeeded in making himself feared, and that tells the whole story. At present, he carries his presumption and confidence so far that he wishes to marry again. Ah! may God preserve me from being the object of his pursuit! It is said that he loved his wife devotedly; but as for the Baroness Hilda, it is generally believed —"

"What is believed?"

"I see that these peasant's stories have never reached you, Monsieur Goeffe, or else you laugh at them, since you have quietly taken up your quarters in this room."

"In fact there is some story connected with it," replied Cristiano, as a remark that he had recently heard flashed into his mind. "The people at the farm said to me this evening, — 'Go there, and let us know in the morning how you passed the night.' The room is haunted, then, by a goblin — a ghost —"

"There must be something strange here, whether a phantom or a real being, for old M. Stenson himself believes so, and the baron also, perhaps. It is said that he has never entered the room since his sister-in-law's death, and he has had a certain door walled up —"

"Yonder," said Cristiano, pointing to the top of the staircase.

"It is possible," replied Margaret, "I don't know."

It is all very mysterious, and I thought you would be well informed about matters that I am ignorant of. I don't believe in ghosts. Still, I shouldn't like to see one, and nothing in the world would induce me to sleep here, as you are going to do. As for the baron, whether the story of the diamond ring is true or false —"

"What! another story —"

"Yes, and the most improbable one of all, I confess; I cannot help laughing as I repeat it. They say, in the cottages of the neighborhood, that the baron loved his wife—who was as wicked himself—so well, that he gave her body, when she died, to an alchemist, who reduced it in an alembic, and turned it into a great black diamond. It is certain, at any rate, that he wears a strange ring upon his finger, which I cannot look at without terror and disgust."

"That is a good proof!" said Cristiano, laughing; "but only think if a similar fate should be reserved for you. They would find nothing, I know, in the alembic where you were baked, but a pretty rose diamond of the purest water, but that would not be any more cheerful for you, and I advise you not to run the risk of being crystallized."

Margaret burst out laughing, but it frightened her to hear her fresh, childlike voice echoed mysteriously through the old room. She became sad, and said in a tone of discouragement:

"Well, enough of that! I see, Monsieur Goeffe, that you are an amiable and witty man, as every one says; but I was very much mistaken in supposing that you would sympathize with me, and would be my guide and protector. You agree with my aunt, you consider all I have told you a mere dream, and you reject the cry of my heart. May God have pity upon me! I have no longer any hope but in Him."

"Wait a little!" replied Cristiano, moved to see great tears rolling over rosy cheeks which had just been so smiling. "Why don't you depend more upon yourself? What have you told me, after all? You announce that you have a confession to make of a delicate nature,

and all it amounts to is that your friends wish you to marry a man who does not please you, and towards whom you feel an antipathy. I thought you were going to confide some love affair to me. You need not blush at that. A love may be pure and honorable, even although ambitious parents disapprove of it. A father and mother may be mistaken, and yet it is painful to resist their influence. You are an orphan! Yes, you must be, since you are dependent upon an old aunt — I call her old, and you shake your head! Assume that she is young — she claims to be so, no doubt, and I, it seems, am no longer a judge, for I considered her old. If she is young, she ought all the more to be sent — I will not say to mind her own business, but to reflect to some purpose, while you ask the advice of some old friend, M. Goeffe, for instance — that is to say, myself — some one, in a word, who can put you in a way to marry the happy mortal whom you prefer.”

“But I assure you, dear M. Goeffe, that I do not love any one,” replied Margaret. “Oh God! it would only need that to complete my misfortunes! It is quite enough to be obliged to endure the importunities of a person you hate.”

“You are not sincere, my dear child,” replied Cristiano, who was playing his part so well and naturally that he really was beginning to feel as if he were M. Goeffe in person; “you are afraid that I will repeat what you confide to me to the countess, my client.”

“Oh, no, no, dear Monsieur Goeffe, it is not so, indeed! I know that you are both honorable and kind-hearted. Every one considers you so, and even the baron, who thinks ill of every one else, dares not say a word against you. Such is my respect for you, my confidence in you, that I have been watching for your arrival at Waldemora; and I must tell you how the idea of seeking you in this way occurred to me: this will give you my whole history in a few words, and I don’t believe my aunt has related it very accurately.

“I was brought up in Chateau Dalby, in Woermiland, twenty leagues distant, under the eyes of my guardian,

Countess Elfride d'Elveda, my father's sister. When I say under her eyes, you know what I mean! My aunt loves society and politics. She accompanies the court to Stockholm, and is much more interested in the affairs of the Diet than in taking care of me. So, all my life, I have lived in a rather gloomy chateau with my French governess, Mademoiselle Potin, who, fortunately, is very kind, and who loves me dearly. My aunt makes us a visit twice a year, to see whether I have grown, whether I am speaking French and Russian well, whether I am in want of anything, and whether the pastor of our church, who is very strict, takes good care that we do not receive any visits besides his own, and those of his family."

"Well, really, that is not very amusing!"

"No; but I have no cause to consider myself unhappy. I study a good deal with my governess, I am quite rich, and my aunt is quite generous, so that I have everything I want; and when the time seems a little long to us, we read novels;—oh, such good and beautiful novels, that make us forget our solitude, and whose moral always is that crime is punished and virtue rewarded!"

"You may be sure of that! At all events, there is no harm in believing it, and behaving accordingly. But there must have been some hero of all this solitude, and of all these romances; did no handsome young fellow, in spite of pastor or aunt, contrive to glide into the house, or at least into your heart?"

"Oh! no, never, I assure you, Monsieur Goeffe!" replied Margaret, frankly. "But when my aunt told me suddenly eight days ago that she had selected a husband for me, I will confess that I formed a certain ideal of what he would be like; and when she pointed out Baron Olaus de Waldemora, and said,—'There he is, be amiable,' he was so different from what I expected, that I was not amiable at all."

"I can understand that. And then, your aunt?"

"Oh, she laughed at me! 'You are a simpleton,' she said. 'Girls of rank have no business to think anything about love. They are not expected to marry for love,

but to secure a brilliant position. I intend you to be Baroness de Waldemora; otherwise, I declare that you shall remain a prisoner all your life in this chateau, without seeing a living soul. I will do more: I will dismiss Mademoiselle Potin, who looks as if she gave you bad advice. Choose;—I give you a month to decide. The baron has invited us to spend the Christmas festivities* at his splendid residence in Dalecarlia. It will be very gay there; hunts, balls, entertainments of all sorts will be going on from morning until night. You will be able to form an idea of his wealth, his influence, his power, and you will acknowledge that you can never hope to make a more brilliant or a more honorable marriage.”

“And so you said yes?”

“I said yes, that I would come to Dalecarlia, since she gave me a month for reflection. I was glad enough to see a new country, to go to entertainments; in a word, to see a few human beings. But we have been here now for eight days, and I give you my word, Monsieur Goeffe, that I consider the baron still more disagreeable than the first day I saw him.”

“But you will meet at his house—if you have not done so already—some one less disagreeable, to whom you will open your heart, as you are now doing, and who will inspire you with a hope of happiness, a courage to resist tyranny, that will help you a great deal more than the advice of an old lawyer.”

“No, Monsieur Goeffe, I shall open my heart to no one but you, and I certainly shall not confide in the persons I may happen to meet at the Chateau de Waldemora. I can see plainly that the baron’s guests are people whom he has helped, or who need his help; servile or ambitious, they fear or flatter him, and all of them (except a few excellent young people whom I am very friendly with) bow down before me as if I were already the wife of their patron! I hate and despise these provincial courtiers, but I have faith in you, M. Goeffe!

* The Christmas festivities in Sweden and Norway last from the twenty-fourth of December to the sixth of January.

You are the baron's business-man, but you are not his vassal. Your pride and independence are well known. You see that my aunt did not succeed in deceiving me. She told me that you would agree with her in everything, that you would treat my romantic dreams with scorn and contempt, and would even persecute me on account of them ; but we heard a very different story from the brother of Mademoiselle Potin, who is tutor in a family in your province, and who knows you intimately. You know who I mean — M. Jacques Potin, whom you have done so much for."

"Yes, yes, a charming fellow !"

"Charming ! no ! He is humpbacked !"

"Charming in character ! His hump has nothing to do with that."

"That is true ; he is a distinguished man, and he has told us so much good of you, that I resolved to see you without letting my aunt know it. Mademoiselle Potin — who is a capital hand at finding out what is going on — learned the day and hour when you were expected at the new chateau ; and, as she was watching for your arrival, she heard at once that you had gone to stop at Stollborg, because the new chateau was too full. With a look she told me all, just as I was completing my toilet, with my aunt's assistance. My aunt had still her own toilet to make, and as this always takes her two hours, at least, she went to her own room. Mademoiselle Potin remained in mine, to make some excuse in case the countess should send for me, while I slipped down a private staircase to the shore of the lake, where Potin had told my faithful Peterson to wait for me with the sleigh, and here I am ! But there are the fanfares at the new chateau, announcing the opening of the ball. I must run away as quickly as possible. And then that poor coachman must be frozen with waiting so long. Adieu, Monsieur Goeffe ! will you allow me to return to-morrow, while my aunt is taking a nap ? She always dances a great deal, and gets very tired at a ball, and I can come perfectly well, while I am walking with my governess."

"Besides, if your aunt is angry," said Cristiano, in

rather too young a tone, "you can tell her that I am lecturing you, just as she would like to have me."

"No," said Margaret, with an instinctive feeling of distrust, "I do not want to turn her into ridicule; and it will, perhaps, be as well for me not to return. If you will promise me to make her abandon this horrible marriage, I shall not need to trouble you with my anxiety."

"I promise to interest myself in you," replied Cristiano, more guardedly, "as if you were my own daughter; but you must keep me informed as to the success of my efforts."

"Then I will return. How good you are, Monsieur Goeffe, and how grateful I ought to be to you. Oh, I was quite right in saying that you would be my good angel!"

Margaret spoke warmly; and rising, held out her little hands to the pretended old man, who kissed them most respectfully, while gazing for a moment upon the ravishing little countess in her pale rose-colored satin, trimmed with down. He helped her, in the most fatherly way, to clasp her ermine pelisse, and put on her hood without crushing the ribbons and flowers of her coiffure, and then escorted her back to the sleigh, amid whose eider-down cushions she disappeared like a swan in its nest.

The sleigh flew off, leaving a luminous track along the ice, and was lost to sight behind the rocks along the shore before Cristiano, who remained standing on the steep cliffs of Stollborg, had thought either of the piercing cold or of his devouring hunger.

The fact is that the young adventurer, besides being a good deal agitated (of this he took no note), was spell-bound by a wonderful spectacle. The bourrasque, completely lulled, had been succeeded by a strong west wind (this wind brings clear weather in the north, although it has an opposite effect in other climates), which had swept the clouds from the sky in a few seconds. The stars were shining with far more brilliancy than in southern countries. Cristiano felt as if he had never seen them before. They looked literally like suns; and the crescent moon also, in proportion as it arose in the purified atmosphere, poured forth a powerful radiance, which, in any other re-

gion, would have been super-planetary. The night, already so clear, was made still brighter by the light reflected from the snow and ice, and the grand features of the landscape were as sharply defined in the transparent atmosphere as in a silver dawn.

These features were sublime. Granite mountains, with their angular peaks covered with eternal snows, shut in a narrow horizon, open only along the valley towards the south-west. The level surfaces and details were a little obscured, but the general outline of the picture was brought out with perfect distinctness by the immense side vault of the blue sky left uncovered by the break in the granite chain. Cristiano, who may be said to have groped his way to Stollborg through whirlwinds of snow, knew the points of the compass well enough to understand that he had come by this gently undulating valley, and he formed a very correct idea of the direction of the gorges of Falun. This was the station where he had breakfasted in the morning, while M. Goefle, whose horse was strong and swift, had stopped there at a later hour and for a longer time.

The valley, or rather the chain of narrow valleys leading from Falun to the Chateau de Waldemora, came to an end abruptly in this place, in an apparent cul-de-sac, an irregular amphitheatre of lofty summits formed by one of the spurs of the Sevenberg chain (otherwise the mountains of Seves, or Sevons), which separates central Sweden from the southern part of Norway. Two fierce torrents descend from the heights of Sevenberg, from the north-west to the south-east, follow the chain to the right and to the left, and rush, in proportion as it lowers, the one towards the Baltic and the other towards Lake Wener and the Kattegat. These two torrents, which gradually become rivers, are the Dala and the Klara; or, as we say, the Dal and the Klar.

Stollborg stood upon a small rocky island, in the centre of one of the little lakes formed by the Klar, or by one of its rapid branches. The reader will not care for minute geographical details, but we can describe the principal characteristics of the landscape with sufficient

accuracy. It was a scene of wild and savage desolation; the mountains shone in the limpid night like a group of crystal fortresses built at unequal heights, in the boldest and most capricious manner; snowy granite peaks shut in three-quarters of the horizon; a lower range of snowy mica-schist peaks assumed forms less grand and more fantastic; while everywhere a thousand frozen waterfalls hung motionless in diamond needles along the rocks. These silent cascades all converged towards the main stream, which was also imprisoned by the ice, and welded, as it were, to the lake, whose shores could only be traced by the debris and sharp peaks of naked stone whose black flanks the winter had not been able to cover with its white uniform hue.

"I have often been told," thought Cristiano, "that these severe northern nights reveal unheard-of splendours, both to the eye and imagination. If I should return to Naples and should tell them that their nights appeal only to the senses, and that he who has not seen winter upon his throne of frost cannot form the least idea of the wonders of the divine work, I should probably be insulted or stoned. What then? There is beauty everywhere under heaven, and he who feels that beauty keenly, will always perhaps find the last impression the most satisfactory and inspiring. Yes, this must really be sublime, for here I am forgetting the cold, which I thought I should never be able to endure, and finding a sort of pleasure even in breathing this air that goes through you like a knife. I must certainly go to Lapland, although Puffo forsakes me, and poor Jean perishes in the snow. I want to see a night twenty-four hours long, and the pale glimmer of noon in the month of January. I should have no success in that country, but my moderate earnings here will enable me travel like a great lord, that is to say, alone and on foot, with nothing to do but to see and enjoy the fine flower of life, *novelty*, the quality that distinguishes desire from lassitude, dream from memory."

Eager and imaginative, the young man gazed far away into the circle of high mountains, in search of the

invisible route that he would have to take in going to the north, or entering Norway. In fancy he already saw himself reclining upon the edge of fearful abysses, while, to the amazement of the old Scandinavian echoes, he sang some foolish *tarantelle*, when the music of a distant orchestra struck upon his ear, and he recognized the distant refrain of an old-fashioned French song, probably very new among the Dalecarlians. The music was at the new chateau, where Baron Olaus was giving a ball to his country neighbors in honor of the charming Margaret Elveda.

Cristiano recalled his wandering thoughts. A moment before he had been ready to fly to the North Cape; now his curiosity, thoughts, aspirations, were all directed to the brilliant chateau, glittering on the shore of the lake, and seeming to exhale whiffs of artificial heat into the atmosphere.

"One thing is certain," he said, "I would not for five hundred crowns (and God only knows how much I need five hundred crowns) quit this strange country to-night, even to be transported by the *walkyries* to the sapphire palace of the great Odin. To-morrow I shall see this blond fairy again, this descendant of Harold the Fair-haired! To-morrow?—no, indeed, nothing of the kind! I shall not see her again to-morrow; I shall never see her again! To-morrow, the fortunate mortal who has a legitimate right to the sweet name of Goeffe will go to the new chateau to confer with his client, and labor with her perhaps, like a genuine heartless business man, to bring about the marriage of the ferocious Olaus and sweet Margaret. To-morrow sweet Margaret will know she has been deceived, and by whom? With what anger, what scorn will she reward my good behavior and wise advice! But all that does not prevent me from feeling hungry, and from being obliged to acknowledge that this December night, between sixty-one and sixty-two degrees of latitude, is rather cool. It makes me think of the time when I used to complain about the winter in Rome!"

Cristiano was returning to the bear-room, when he thought he would give a charitable look at his ass. As

he entered the stable, he noticed, for the first time, M. Goefle's sleigh, which was standing in the coach-house. Why, at the sight of this sleigh, the mind of the adventurer should have leaped suddenly to a mad resolution, we cannot explain; but, on regaining his comfortable lodging, instead of sitting down quietly to supper with his back to the stove, it is certain that he began to contemplate the full black suit which the doctor of laws had hung over the back of a chair.

Cristiano would have sworn that the grave individual whom he had ventured to imitate was old-fashioned, and perhaps rather shabby in his dress. Not at all. M. Goefle, who had been quite handsome in his youth, dressed remarkably well, was careful of his person, and made it a point of honor to appear in a simple but tasteful costume, doing full justice to his good leg, and still erect and well-formed figure. Cristiano put on the coat, which fitted him like a glove. He found the powder-box and puff, and threw a light cloud over his thick, black hair. The silk stockings were rather tight in the calf, and the shoes with buckles rather large; but what of that! were the Dalecarlians so very critical? In short, in ten minutes the young man was attired like a respectable member of society; a professor of some science, a student in some learned faculty; or member of a dignified profession! No matter what his standing, his figure, at all events, was charming, and his costume irreproachable.

The reader can guess that the adventurer led M. Goefle's horse from the stable, after begging Jean not to feel lonely; that he harnessed the docile Loki to the sleigh, lighted the lantern, and darted like an arrow down the steep road of Stollborg.

In about ten minutes, he entered the brilliantly lighted court of the new chateau, threw the reins carelessly to the servants in livery, who hastened forward at the sound of the sleigh-bells, and ran up the great front steps of the elegant mansion four steps at a time.

III.

CRISTIANO was acting as we do in certain dreams, when we feel drawn on to accomplish some improbable thing without being able to tell how. Were not all his surroundings utterly improbable? This fantastic chateau, called the new chateau, in opposition to the ruin of Stollborg, but dating back, in reality, to the time of Queen Catherine, and which, with its splendor and gayety, seemed to have fallen from the clouds into the bosom of a savage desert; these avenues of naked rock and furious waters, over which, thanks to the winter, elegant equipages made their way without difficulty, although it seemed as if they must be utterly impassable; the rows of lights outlining against the darkness the principal walls with their thick towers, crowned with coppered roofs surmounted by huge spires; the main building long, irregularly flanked with square pavilions, and finished off with gigantic gables notched with statues and emblems; the great clock in the central pavilion, which was striking ten o'clock at night,—an hour when the very bears are afraid to stir the snow where they lie cowering, but when man, the most delicate animal of creation, dances in silk stockings with bare-shouldered women; everything in the savage grandeur of the situation and the courtly scene filling it with animation, even to the playful and quaint harmony of the old-fashioned French music blending unceremoniously with the sharp whistling of the wind in the long corridors;—all this seemed made to astonish a traveller, and confuse the ideas of an Italian.

As he gazed upon the immense saloons, and long gallery painted with mythological divinities, and full of company and noise, Cristiano asked himself whether these people were not phantoms conjured up in mockery by the sorcerers of this solitary place. Whence had they come, with their antiquated dresses, these men in spangled coats, these women with powdered hair, smiling through clouds of feathers and laces? Would not this magical chateau

disappear at the stroke of a wand? these gay dancers of the minuet and *chaconne*, would they not fly away in the shape of white eagles or wild swans?

Cristiano had already noticed, however, the national peculiarities of the Swedes; the adventurous isolation of their dwellings, the enormous distances separating them from the little settlements honored by the name of village; the straggling appearance of the villages themselves, which sometimes extend over two or three leagues with only one common centre—the parish church, with its green dome; the contempt of the nobility for cities, which they abandon entirely to the trading portion of the community; in a word, their passion for a lonely country life, united, singularly enough, to a passion for wild, extravagant expeditions, undertaken for the sake of enjoying sudden and apparently impossible social gatherings. Cristiano had been invited to a country merry-making, but he had not foreseen that these characteristic instincts of the Swedes would be made more active by the severity of the climate, the length of the nights, and the apparent difficulty of holding communication with each other. This, however, was a natural consequence of the necessity that man always feels to conquer nature, and turn the compensations that she offers him to account. For two months the baron had given notice for fifty leagues around, that he would entertain the nobility of the country during the Christmas festivities. The baron was neither esteemed nor loved by any one; and yet, for a number of days, his chateau had been full of eager guests, who, coming from all the four points of the compass, had crossed lakes, rivers, and mountains, to attend his summons.

Hospitality is proverbial in Dalecarlia, and, like the love of the people for a country life united to their love of pleasure, it increases in proportion as they live in remote and inaccessible regions. Cristiano, who had noticed with what wonderful kindness strangers are received in Sweden—above all, when they speak the language—had scarcely thought how difficult it might prove to gain admission to a *soirée* where he knew no one, especially since he had not been invited. He was unpleasantly re-

minded of his oversight by seeing a sort of major-domo, wearing a sword, who came up to him in the hall, and held out his hand with the utmost politeness, after bowing respectfully.

At first Cristiano was going to shake hands with him kindly, under the supposition that it was a custom of the country to welcome people in this way, but he reflected that he might be asking him to produce his invitation. The major-domo was old, ugly, and pock-marked; his eyes were downcast, and their hypocritical expression was poorly disguised by an affectation of gentle apathy. Cristiano put his hand into his vest pocket, although certain of not finding what he wanted. It is true that he had been invited to visit Waldemora at the expense of his host, but not upon the same footing with the gentlemen of the country. He was preparing, therefore, to play the part of a man who has forgotten his card of admission, and who is disposed to return in search of it, with the privilege of not making his appearance again, when he found in his pocket—that is in M. Goefle's pocket—a letter signed by the baron, which proved to be a regular invitation for the honorable M. Goefle and family, this being the usual formula. As soon as Cristiano saw what it was, he handed it boldly to the major-domo, who read it at a glance.

“Monsieur is the relative of M. Goefle?” he said, putting the letter into a basket with a great many others.

“Of course!” replied Cristiano, with assurance.

M. Johan (this was the name of the major-domo) bowed again, and opened a door upon the main staircase, where the guests stopping at the chateau were coming and going, as well as the neighbors, who, as they were perfectly well known to the servants of the house, were allowed to enter freely. Cristiano's introduction was confined to this simple formality, which he would have been very glad to dispense with, for he did not propose to take any direct part in the entertainment, but wanted merely to have a general view of it, and enjoy the satisfaction of seeing the charming Margaret.

He entered, first, the long frescoed gallery that trav-

ersed the whole of the main building, and which was decorated with passable success, in imitation of the Italian taste, introduced into Sweden by Queen Christina. The pictures were not good, but they were effective. They represented hunting scenes; and though an artist could not have failed to criticise the drawing and action of the dogs, horses, and wild animals, he could at least have enjoyed the general effect of the brilliant and lively coloring.

Cristiano walked along this gallery until he came to a handsome saloon, where they were beginning to dance. His only thought in looking at the ladies taking part was of Margaret, but his desire to see her was blended with a secret anxiety. How should he renew the conversation begun at Stollborg? how substitute his own character? or, at all events, some new character, no matter what, for the one he had assumed? This no longer appeared to him so easy as he had imagined it would prove on engaging in this wild adventure. He was almost glad to find that Margaret was not in the ball-room; and he took advantage of this respite—for so he felt it to be—to try and form an idea of the company moving before him.

Contrary to his expectation, he found nothing to wonder at. At a first glance, this gathering had none of the peculiarities that he had anticipated. The age, at this period, belonged to Voltaire, and consequently to France. Like most of the European sovereigns, the upper classes in almost every part of Europe had adopted the language, and apparently the philosophical and literary ideas of France. But, as taste, logic, and discernment are always confined to the select few, this infatuation for our ideas gave rise to a great many inconsistencies. For example, the customs and manners of foreign nations reproduced much more frequently the corruption and effeminacy of Versailles than the studious leisure of Ferney. France was the fashion as well as philosophy. Arts, customs, monuments, good breeding, deportment, conduct, were all copied, with more or less success, from the prevailing French fashion.

France, with all her contradictory qualities, good and bad, magnificent and petty, noble and contemptible, was accepted indiscriminately. It was one of those characteristic epochs, when progress and decay shake hands before joining in deadly conflict.

The ball given by Baron Olaus was a mere imitation, a little behind the times, of a French reunion of the eighteenth century; and yet the baron hated France, and was intriguing in the interest of Russia. But in Russia also they imitated France, and spoke the French language; at court they were extremely barbarous, and even ferocious in their manners, and yet they were trying to adopt the gallant manners and intellectual refinement of French civilization. Baron Olaus, therefore, was borne along by the irresistible current of the age. We shall learn his history later. Let us return now to Cristiano.

After looking for a while at the dresses of the ladies, which seemed to him only a few years behind French fashions, and at their faces, which were generally sweet and intelligent, although they were not all young and beautiful, he turned his attention to the gentlemen, and tried to recognize, that is to say to guess among them, the face and figure of the master of the house. Not far from the spot where he was observing all that went on without making himself conspicuous, two men were talking in a low voice, with their backs towards him. Involuntarily Cristiano followed their conversation, although he felt no personal interest in it.

These two men were talking French, one with a Russian, and the other with a Swedish accent. The language of courts and diplomacy seemed to be necessary to enable them to exchange their ideas.

"Pshaw!" said the Swede, "I am not a *cap* any more than a *hat*, although I am thought to be at the head of a certain faction of the thickest cotton caps in the Diet. I laugh at them all alike, as a matter of fact; you understand very little about Sweden, if you think more of one than of the others."

"I know it," replied the Russian; "they sell their votes to the highest bidder."

"Bid, then! You have no other policy. It is simple, and for you easy, since yours is a rich government. I am with you heart and soul, without any question of recompense. With me it is a matter of conviction."

"I know you are not one of those patriots of the golden age, who are dreaming about the Scandinavian union, and that one can always come to an understanding with you. The empress relies upon you, but you need not hope to avoid her liberality; she accepts no service without rewarding it magnificently."

"I am aware of it," replied the Swede, with a brutality that struck Cristiano; "I have learned it from experience. Long live the great Catherine! If she wants to put us in her pocket, let her do it; I shall be the last one to offer any opposition. If she will only rid us of all these foolish doctrines about the rights and liberty of the peasants—which are our curse—she will be doing a good work. The citizens and noblemen who are their leaders, ought to be arrested, and have respectively a good taste of the knout, and a good dose of Siberia administered to them. As for our worthy king, if his bishopric is restored to him, and, above all, if he gets rid of his wife, he will have nothing to complain of."

"Don't speak so loud," replied the Russian, "some one may be listening without seeming to."

"There is no danger. Every one here pretends to speak French, but there are not ten persons out of a hundred who can understand it. Besides, what I have just said, I am in the habit of saying freely. I discovered long ago that it is the best policy to make your opinions feared. For my part, I shout upon the house-tops that Sweden is done for. Let those who object prove the contrary."

Although Cristiano did not belong to any nation, although he knew nothing either of his country or family, he felt indignant to hear a Swede so impudently selling his nationality, and he tried to see the features of the man who could talk so; but his attention was

suddenly diverted by the bustling, awkward approach of an eccentric individual, who was running about from group to group with the activity of a man who is taking pains to do the honors of the entertainment. This individual was dressed in a gaudy red coat, very richly embroidered, and decorated with the Swedish order of the polar star. His wig was frizzed magnificently, in the very worst style, and was much too high for the fashion; while his enormous cuffs of superb lace were more suggestive of luxury than neatness. In other respects he was old, ugly, petulant, and whimsical; slightly hump-backed, very lame, and completely cross-eyed. This last defect gave him, at a first glance, a wicked expression, and Cristiano concluded that this disagreeable original must be one and the same person with Margaret's absurd and hateful suitor.

To avoid being obliged to introduce himself, and keep up his pretended relationship with M. Goeffe, whose name he had assumed unscrupulously and without danger in his interview with the major-domo, Cristiano prudently withdrew. He resolved now to go from room to room until he had seen the young countess, even if he should be obliged to retire immediately, without speaking to her. He imagined that the hump-backed chatelain had looked at him with a good deal of curiosity, but he made his way skilfully through a group of persons who were talking near a door, and flattered himself that he had escaped in time.

He walked along for several minutes, not exactly in a crowd (the place was so large that the guests did not look very numerous), but amid lively groups, which he did not have leisure to observe attentively. Fearing to be questioned before he could find Margaret, he passed with a preoccupied manner and proud expression—which he assumed all the more because he felt his audacity ready to fail him. And yet, whether from curiosity about a guest that no one knew, or because of their admiration for his fine presence and remarkable face, people everywhere seemed inclined to speak to him, or at least to receive his advances favorably. But Cristiano was

feeling a sort of vertigo that made him misunderstand the affable glances and good-humored smiles that were bestowed upon him. He hurried along, therefore, without pretending to disguise that he was seeking some one; to the persons who made way before him, he bowed with an easy grace that was natural to him, but without daring to look at them closely.

At last, on returning to the hunting-gallery, as it was called, he saw two ladies, in whom he immediately recognized the blond fairy whom he had seen at Stollborg an hour before, and her governess. Mademoiselle Potin's simple dress, timid and refined manner, and a something about her unmistakably French, left no doubt as to her identity. This completed the first part of the little romance that Cristiano had planned. He was at the chateau, he had found no sort of difficulty in getting admitted, he had avoided the observation and questions of the master of the house; and, lastly, he had found Margaret under the kind protection of her confidante. But this was not all. He had still to approach the young countess, or attract her attention, and find some means of renewing their acquaintance on a new footing.

The second part of the romance opened in rather an alarming way. Just as Cristiano, who hoped that a look of Margaret's would inspire him, was trying to catch her eye, he heard an unequal step clamping along behind him, and a shrill, squeaking voice stopped him short with these words:

"Monsieur! Stranger! stranger! Where are you going so fast?"

The adventurer turned, and found himself face to face with the deformed, cross-eyed old man, whom he thought he had so successfully avoided. It was literally face to face, for the lame man, who was rushing in pursuit of him, could not change his gait quickly enough, and almost fell into his arms. Cristiano might have fled, but that would have been to lose everything; he faced it out boldly, and replied:

"I beg a thousand pardons, baron; you are the very person I was looking for."

"Ah, indeed!" said the lame man, holding out his hand with sudden cordiality; "I thought as much. I remarked your face among all the others. 'That is an educated man,' I said to myself; 'some learned traveller, a serious person, a mind, in a word, and certainly I am the pole which always attracts such magnets.' Well, here I am, at your service. It gives me pleasure to devote myself to you. I love young people when they are studious, and you can ask me all the questions that you want to have solved."

There was so much simplicity and good-humor in the old man's laughing face and vain talk, that Cristiano in his heart accused Margaret of doing him injustice. He was an absurd and impossible lover, to be sure, but he was the best old fellow in the world, and as harmless as a child. Although one of his eyes did wander about the room in a vague and aimless sort of a way, the other one looked at his companion with such a frank and fatherly expression, that it was utterly out of the question to accuse him of ferocity.

"I am overwhelmed by your goodness, baron," replied Cristiano, sufficiently reassured to be somewhat ironical. "I knew that you were versed in the sciences, and therefore having myself some feeble notion—"

"You wanted to ask my advice, to have the benefit of my instruction, perhaps. Ah! my dear friend, method, method in all things. But I won't keep you standing among these frivolous people, who are coming and going; sit down, sit down. No one will disturb us; and, if you feel inclined, we will talk all night. When science is the theme, I forget all about fatigue, hunger, and sleep. You are the same, no doubt. The fact is you must be so, or not meddle with becoming learned!"

"Alas!" thought Cristiano, "I have fallen into the bottom of a well of science, and am condemned to the mines, I wager, neither more nor less than an exile of Siberia."

This discovery was the more cruel, because Margaret

had passed on, and was already at the end of the gallery, chatting with one and another of the persons who came forward to greet her, and evidently going to the ball-room, where the baron did not seem at all inclined to join her. He was seated in one of the semicircular embrasures of the gallery, near a stove, concealed by some branches of yew and ivy, which, with various hunting weapons and stuffed heads of wild animals, formed a trophy.

"I see," said Cristiano, who would have given a great deal to avoid the proposed scientific conversation, "that you are a universal genius. Your skill in hunting is everywhere talked of, and I am surprised that you have time —"

"Why do you take me for a hunter?" replied the old man, with a look of surprise. "Oh! you suppose that I am guilty of the murder of those beasts, whose mutilated heads are hanging there, looking at us so sadly with their poor enamel eyes! You are mistaken; I never hunted in my life. I have a horror of amusements which increase the ferocity only too natural to man. It is to the study of the insensible but fruitful entrails of the globe that I have devoted myself."

"Excuse me, baron, I thought —"

"There, again, why do you call me baron? I am nothing of the kind; although it is true that the king ennobled me and conferred on me the knighthood of the polar star, as a reward for my labors in the mines of Falun. I was professor of the school of mineralogy in that city, as of course you know, but I have no right to a title. It is quite enough for me to have some few privileges which give me a position with the haughty caste, for which, after all, I don't care the least in the world."

"I have made some mistake," thought Cristiano. "Oh, then! I shall have to escape from this scientific gentleman as quickly as possible, although I seek him out again later."

But he changed his mind suddenly when he saw Margaret turning back, and proceeding slowly, in spite of

numerous interruptions, towards the very spot where he was seated. His only thought now was to put himself on the best terms with the geologist, so that he might introduce him, if he could possibly bring it about, as a distinguished man. He dashed into conversation, therefore; and he knew more than enough to ask intelligent questions. At Falun, in the morning, he had visited the principal mine, and had taken pleasure in collecting a number of interesting specimens, to the great disgust of Puffo, who often thought him crazy. He knew, moreover, that if you listen respectfully to a learned and vain man, and give him an opportunity to display his knowledge, he will be pretty sure, as a usual thing, to think you very intelligent. This is exactly what happened. Without dreaming of asking his name, his country, or his profession, the professor gave Cristiano a minute description of the subterranean world. In fact, upon the surface of the globe, he cared for nothing but himself, his reputation, and his writings; in a word, for the success of his observations and discoveries.

At any other time Cristiano would have listened with pleasure, for he saw plainly that he was talking to a man who was thoroughly master of his subject, and, for his own part, he felt a deep interest in all departments of natural science; but Margaret was approaching, and his thoughts began to wander. The professor noticed his sudden preoccupation, and looking around with his good eye, cried:

"Ah! there is my fiancée! I am no longer surprised! *Parbleu!* my dear friend, I must introduce you to the most amiable person in the kingdom."

"It is really he, then!" thought Cristiano, in profound amazement. "I am talking to Baron Olaus! He seems to be half crazy, but this is actually the old man to whom this Rose of the North is to be sacrificed!"

He ceased to doubt, although his surprise was redoubled when he saw Margaret quicken her step, and heard her say to Mademoiselle Potin:

"Here is my lover at last!"

She held out her hand to the old man, and added, with a sweet and almost tender smile :

"What are you thinking of, monsieur, to hide yourself in this little corner, when your fiancée has been looking for you for the last hour?"

"You see," said the professor to Cristiano, with artless satisfaction, "she looks for me, she is unhappy when I am not with her! What would you have, my beauty? It is not my fault that so many people wish to consult me, and here is a charming young man, a traveller—French, are you not? or Italian, for you have a very slight foreign accent? Allow me, Countess Margaret, to introduce my young friend, M. de ——. Excuse me, monsieur, what is your name?"

"Christian Goeffle," said Cristiano, without hesitation.

At this assumed name, and, above all, at the young man's voice and pronunciation, Margaret trembled.

"Are you Monsieur Goeffle's son?" she said, eagerly. "Oh, it is singular how much you resemble him!"

"There would be nothing singular in such near relatives looking alike," replied the professor, "but this gentleman can only be Goeffle's nephew. Goeffle never married, and consequently he has no children, any more than myself."

"That would be no reason," Cristiano whispered in the professor's ear.

"To be sure; you are right!" replied the latter in the same tone, and with the most incredible simplicity; "I did not think of that! That devil of a Goeffle! You are his son, then, by a left-handed marriage?"

"Brought up in a foreign country, and just arrived in Sweden," replied Cristiano, astonished at the success of his impromptu suggestions.

"Well, well!" replied the professor, who cared very little about other people's affairs. "I understand; it is quite plain—you are his nephew."

He turned to Margaret.

"I know this gentleman perfectly well," he said; "he is the nephew of my excellent friend Monsieur Goeffle, and I have the honor to present him to you. You don't

know M. Goeffe, but you said this morning that you would like to become acquainted with him."

"And so I should," cried Margaret.

She blushed as she spoke, for at that very moment she met Cristiano's eyes, and their vivacity reminded her of those of the false Goeffe. From time to time the young man, with an involuntary movement, had raised the doctor's green spectacles, so as to see better, and Margaret had noticed how brilliantly his eyes flashed between the ear-pieces of his fur cap.

"But how is it," resumed the professor, addressing the young girl without observing her confusion, "that you are not dancing? I thought you would be the queen of the evening, and that no one would have a chance to speak to you."

"Well, my dear lover, you are mistaken. I am not going to dance. I sprained my foot coming down stairs. Don't you see how lame I am?"

"No, I can't say that I do. You want to resemble me, do you? Tell M. Goeffe how it was that I became lame; it was a terrible affair, and would have been the death of any one else. Yes, monsieur, you see before you a victim of science."

Without giving Margaret time to speak, he began to relate, with great animation, how the rope had broken as he had been descending into a mine, and how he had fallen with the basket into the bottom of the abyss, a distance of fifty feet, seven inches, and five lines. For six hours, fifty-three minutes, and how many seconds we are not prepared to state, he lay in a swoon, and for two months, four days, and three hours and a half, had not been able to move. With the same exasperating accuracy he specified the exact size of the plasters that had been applied to his various wounds, and the quantity, by drachms, grains, and scruples, of the different drugs that he had absorbed, whether in doses taken internally, or by means of external applications rubbed into his skin.

It was a long story, although the old man spoke rapidly, and did not repeat himself. His memory was a real scourge; it would not allow him to omit the least circum-

stance; and when he was talking of himself, it never occurred to him that any one could be tired of listening.

Margaret, who knew the story by heart, could not be very attentive, and talked aside with Mademoiselle Potin for a few moments. The result of this short conference, which Cristiano did not fail to notice, was soon evident; good Mademoiselle Potin seized the moment when the professor had finished his story, and before he could embark in another, which he was all ready to do, begged him, with hypocritical frankness, to explain a paragraph in his last work, which she pretended she had not been able to understand.

Cristiano could not help admiring woman's natural tact, when he saw how eagerly the professor entered into a discussion with the governess, while Margaret's eyes said clearly to the young man:

"I am dying to speak to you."

He did not wait to be told twice, but followed her to the other extremity of the little semicircle, where she seated herself upon a sofa, while he stood before her in a respectful attitude, outside the embrasure, in such a way as to shield her from observation.

"Monsieur Christian Goeffe," she said, looking at him again with the greatest attention, "you are surprisingly like your uncle!"

"I have often been told so, mademoiselle; it seems that it is a striking likeness."

"I have never seen him well; indeed, I may say that I have never seen his face at all; but his accent, his pronunciation — yours are absolutely the same."

"I should have supposed that my voice would be rather younger than his," replied Cristiano, who had taken pains at Stollborg to speak, every now and then, like an old man.

"Yes, no doubt," said the young girl; "there is the difference of age, although your uncle still has a very fine organ. After all, he cannot be so very old! He seemed to me much younger than people say. He has magnificent eyes, and is almost of your height."

"Just about the same," said Cristiano, giving an

involuntary glance at the doctor of law's suit of clothes, and asking himself whether Margaret was speaking ironically, or questioning him in good faith.

He resolved to bring about an explanation.

"There is another point of resemblance between my uncle and myself," he said, "and that is the deep interest that we feel in a person of your acquaintance, and the desire with which we both are animated to be of service to her."

"Ah! ah!" said the young girl, blushing with an air of frankness that dissipated Cristiano's anxiety; "I see that your uncle has been gossiping, and that he has told you about my visit this evening."

"I don't know whether you confided any secret to him; in what he repeated to me there was no mystery at which you need blush."

"Repeated?—repeated? I believe you were there, in some room or closet close by; you heard everything."

"It was so, I confess," replied Cristiano, who saw that she would confide in him more quickly if he took advantage of her innocent suggestion. "I was in my uncle's bedroom, arranging his papers. Without his knowledge, and in spite of myself, I heard everything."

"That is very pleasant, upon my word!" said Margaret, somewhat confused, and yet pleased without knowing why; "instead of one confidante it seems that I had two."

"Your confession seemed to be that of an angel; but I am beginning to be afraid that it was in reality that of a demon."

"Thanks for your good opinion. Will you tell me what has caused it?"

"A strange insincerity that I cannot explain. You described Baron Olaus as a monster, physically and morally—"

"Excuse me, monsieur; you did not understand me. I called him disagreeable, terrible; I never said that he was ugly."

"And yet you might have said so truthfully; for to speak plainly, he is abominably ugly."

"It is true that his hard and cold expression makes him seem so; but every one agrees that he has very fine features."

"The people of this country have a singular standard; but there is no disputing about tastes! I do not agree with them. He seems to me ugly and deformed, but comical and good-humored."

"You are certainly joking, M. Christian Goede, or we do not understand each other. God forgive me, you are looking at the person opposite. Is it possible that you have mistaken him for the Baron de Waldemara?"

"How can I help supposing that the person who calls you his fiancée, and whom you gayly call your lover, is the baron?"

Margaret burst out laughing.

"Oh! dear me," she cried. "if you have really imagined that I could treat Baron Olaus with such friendly familiarity, you must have thought me very deceitful or very inconsistent; but, thank God, I am neither the one nor the other. The individual whom I call jestingly my lover, is a person of no less consequence than the doctor of sciences, Monsieur Stangstadius, of whom you must have heard your uncle speak."

"Doctor Stangstadius," replied Cristiano, feeling very much relieved; "I must confess that I do not know him, even by name. I have just arrived from a distant country, where I have always lived."

"I can understand, then," replied Margaret. "how it is that you have not heard of our learned mineralogist. Your opinion of him is very correct. He is an excellent man, sometimes a little violent, but never malicious. And then he is simple as a child! There are certain days when he imagines that my passion for him, as he calls it, is serious, and when he tries to break the chain, assuring me that a great man like himself belongs to the universe, and cannot devote himself to a woman. I have known him for a long time; ever since he came to the chateau where I was brought up, for the purpose of making investigations on our estates. He passed several weeks with us, and, since then, my aunt has allowed him

to visit me whenever his business brings him to our province. He was my only acquaintance here when I arrived, for you must know that Baron Olaus has made him superintendent of important mining operations on his domain. But there is my aunt looking for me! Now I shall have a good scolding, you will see!"

"Do you want to avoid her? Pass between the wall and this hunting trophy."

"Potin would have to go too, and we could never persuade M. Stangstadius to keep our secret. Oh dear! now my aunt will torment me to death to dance with the baron, but I shall persist in being lame, though the pain is so slight that I scarcely feel it."

"It is nothing at all, I hope."

"Yes, indeed. I was so fortunate as to fall down on the staircase a little while ago, in my aunt's presence. My ankle really did hurt me a little, and I looked dreadfully woe-begone, to prove that I could not possibly open the court dance with the master of the house. My aunt had to take my place, and that is why I am here; but the dance is over, and here she comes!"

In fact, Countess Elfride d'Elveda approached, and Cristiano, who had taken a seat by Margaret's side, drew back a little.

The countess was a small woman, fair, fat, lively and resolute. She was scarcely thirty-five years old, and was very coquettish, although less from gallantry than a love of intrigue.

She was one of the most ardent *caps* in Sweden; that is, she took sides with Russia against France, whose partisans were called *hats*; and with the nobility and Lutheran clergy against the king, who naturally sought his support in the other orders of the state, the citizens and peasants.

She had been pretty, and, what with her wit and rank, was still sufficiently so to make conquests; but there was something in her manner, by turns haughty and familiar, that displeased Cristiano. Her evident duplicity and obstinacy, which he read at a glance, did not seem to him to promise well for Margaret's future.

"Well," she said to the latter, sharply and briefly, "what are you doing here crouched up against this stove, as if you were frozen? Come, I want to speak to you!"

"Yes, aunt," replied Margaret, pretending, with innocent hypocrisy, to rise with difficulty; "but the fact is that I am suffering very much with my foot. Being unable to dance, I felt cold in the large saloon."

"Whom were you talking to?" inquired the countess, looking at Cristiano, who had gone up to M. Stangstadius.

"The nephew of your friend M. Goeffe, whom Monsieur Stangstadius just presented to me. Shall I introduce him to you, aunt?"

Cristiano, who was not listening to the professor, heard perfectly well what Margaret said. Resolved to risk everything to continue his acquaintance with the niece, he came forward of his own accord, and bowed to the aunt in such a respectful and graceful manner, that she was struck by his fine appearance. She must have been very much in need of M. Goeffe, for, in spite of Cristiano's plebeian name, she received him as courteously as if he had belonged to one of the best families in the country; and when Monsieur Stangstadius declared that he was a young man of great merit, became excessively condescending.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance," she said, "and I am angry with M. Goeffe for never speaking to me about a nephew who does him honor. Are you a devotee of science, like our distinguished friend Stangstadius? I am glad to hear it. There is no finer career that a young man can choose. No position is more agreeable than that of the scientific man, for he is not obliged to make sacrifices to obtain consideration."

"I see that it is so in Sweden," replied Cristiano, "and it is an honor to this noble country. In Italy, where I was brought up, and even in France, which was my home for some time, it is very different; there, learned men are generally poor, and poorly encouraged, when they are not persecuted by religious fanaticism."

This reply enraptured the geologist, who was very vain

of his country, and was extremely pleasing to the countess, who despised France.

"You are right," she said, "and I do not understand why your uncle should not have had you educated in your own country, where the position of students is so fortunate and honorable."

"He wished me to speak the foreign languages with facility," replied Cristiano, saying the first thing that occurred to him, "but he need not have sent me so far upon that account; for you speak French here, I find, as well as they do in France."

"We are much obliged to you for your politeness," said the countess, "but you are flattering us. We do not speak it as well as you do, probably, and our Italian is still worse — although every one who is carefully educated studies it. You must talk Italian with my niece, and, if she makes mistakes, laugh at her well. But why is M. Goefle so anxious about the modern languages? Does he intend you for a diplomat?"

"Perhaps, madame; I am not yet fully aware of his intentions."

"Fie! Fie! Pooh!" cried the geologist.

"Softly, dear professor," resumed the countess; "there is a great deal to be said on that side too. All careers are desirable for those who know how to make them so."

"If you, madame, will condescend to advise me, I shall esteem it a privilege to be indebted to you for a valuable suggestion."

"It will give me pleasure to do so," she replied, with an affectation of genial amiability; "and I feel all the more interest in you, because you have all the qualities to insure success. Come with us to the dancing-hall. I want my niece to dance at least one minuet; it is not fatiguing, and she is very perverse to refuse. Do you hear, Margaret? You must do like every one else!"

"But, aunt," said Margaret, "every one has not a sprained ankle."

"In society, my child (I am saying this, Monsieur Goefle, for your benefit as well), you must never let anything prevent you from being agreeable or useful. Re-

member one thing: no one fails to fulfil his destiny but through his own fault. You must have a will of iron; you must be superior to cold and heat, hunger and thirst, great sufferings as well as little pains. The world is not, as young people imagine, a fairy palace, where you live for enjoyment. It is, on the contrary, a place of trial, where you will have to conquer all your wants, all your desires, all your repugnances, with real stoicism;—that is, if you have an aim in life, and if you have not you are a very weak person. Ask your *lover*, Margaret, whether he thinks of his little comforts when he descends into an abyss to seek that which is the aim of his life. Very well; under the domes of palaces, as well as in the caverns of mines, there are horrors to be braved. That of dancing with a slight pain in your ankle is a very little thing in comparison with what is before you. Come along; get up and come!”

Margaret could not help looking piteously at Cristiano, as much as to say:

“You see, I shall never be as strong as she is.”

“Shall I offer my arm to Countess Margaret?” said Cristiano to the imperious aunt; “she is really limping.”

“No, no; it is nothing but caprice! You will see that she will stop limping soon enough, for it is very awkward. Come, Margaret, give your arm to M. Stangstadius, and go before us; we want to see which of you limps the most.”

“What’s that? What’s that?” cried the professor; “I don’t limp at all, when I’m careful. If I choose I can walk ten times straighter and faster than the best pedestrians. I only wish you could see me up in the mountains, proving to the lazy guides that one can do whatever he wishes!”

As he spoke, M. Stangstadius began to walk very rapidly, but with such a vigorous elevation of his misshapen person at every alternate step, that poor Margaret was almost lifted bodily off the floor.

“Give me your arm,” said Countess Elfride to Cristiano; “not that I care for an escort, or require any assistance, but because I wish to speak to you.”

Cristiano obeyed, and the countess, who both walked and talked rapidly, added :

"Your uncle has told you, I suppose, that I wish to marry my niece to the Baron de Waldemora?"

"Yes, madame, he told me so — this evening."

"This evening? Has he arrived? I did not know that he was here!"

"He could not find a room at the chateau, no doubt, and he is stopping at Stollborg."

"What! In that den of evil spirits? Well! he will be in good company! But isn't he coming to the ball?"

"I hope not!" replied Cristiano, thoughtlessly.

"You hope not!"

"I say so because of his gout, which requires perfect repose."

"Indeed! Has he the gout? What a trial to such a brisk, active man! He never had it before, and imagined that he was always going to escape."

"It is quite recent — the attack came on only a few days ago. He sent me here in his place to present his compliments to you, and receive your commands, which I will communicate to him as soon as he wakes in the morning."

"Very well, then, you can tell him what I say. This is a matter that I make no sort of mystery about. I have noticed that, when you proclaim your plans boldly, they are already half accomplished. It is my wish, therefore, to marry my niece to the baron. You will tell me, perhaps, that he is not young; for that very reason he has no time to lose in frustrating the schemes of a dozen heirs whom he detests, and who are trying in vain to worm their way into his favor. Stay, there are two of them passing now; the one this way is the Count de Nora, an inoffensive, good-natured man; the other, the Baron de Lindenwald, is intelligent, designing, ambitious, and (like all of our nobility at present) poor. Baron Olaus is a happy exception, because he has no brothers. Now, what I want you to understand — you and your uncle as well — is, that the baron looks with a favorable eye upon my niece, and that she dislikes him.

This does not discourage me at all. My niece is a child, and will submit. Since my resolution is known, no one will venture to pay court to him, and I will take care of her. Your uncle must undertake to bring the baron to a determination, and he can do it easily."

"If the countess will condescend to give me her instructions —"

"You shall have them in two words: my niece loves the baron!"

"Really?"

"What! You do not understand? An aspirant in diplomacy!"

"Ah! of course; — excuse me, madame — Countess Margaret is reputed to love the baron, although she detests him, and —"

"The baron must believe that he is loved?"

"And it is Monsieur Goefle who must make him think so?"

"He alone. The baron is very suspicious; I have known him of old; I could not persuade him. He would suppose that I was interested."

"Which is not the case," said Cristiano, smiling.

"Which is the case! — for my niece. Ought I not to be so?"

"Assuredly; but will M. Goefle lead himself to this slight exaggeration?"

"A lawyer hesitate to embellish the truth a little? Nonsense! When your dear uncle has a suit to gain he is not so scrupulous!"

"No doubt; but will the baron believe him?"

"He will believe whatever M. Goefle tells him. According to him, he is the only sincere man alive."

"The baron, then, wishes to be loved for himself?"

"Yes, he has that fancy."

"If he loves Countess Margaret he will find it easy to deceive himself."

"Loves her? Do you suppose any one falls in love when they have reached his age? That has nothing to do with it. The baron is a man of serious character, who wishes to marry for the sake of leaving an heir, having

lost his son five years ago. If his wife is pretty, and of good family, he will be satisfied, and his only request of her will be not to make him ridiculous. Now he runs no risks with my niece; she is a girl of good principles, and, whether contented or not, she will never forget her dignity. You can tell your uncle so, to set his doubts at rest. Tell him, also, that he can rely upon my gratitude, which, as he knows, is not to be despised. In my position I can reward slight services with important ones; and, to begin with, what would he like for you? What would you like for yourself? Do you want to be attaché at once, and on a good footing with the Russian embassy? I have only to say the word. The ambassador is here."

"God forbid!" said Cristiano, who detested Russia.

He recovered himself quickly, and not wishing to have a misunderstanding with the countess too soon, finished his sentence thus:

"God forbid that I should ever forget your goodness! I will do all in my power to deserve it."

"Very well, begin at once."

"Shall I go over to Stollborg and wake up my uncle?"

"No; keep near my niece, and talk to her from time to time in the course of the evening. Take advantage of the opportunity to eulogize the baron."

"But I do not know him."

"You have seen him, that is enough. You can speak as if you had been struck by his fine manner and noble figure."

"I should be quite at your service if I had seen him; but—"

"Ah! you have not yet paid your respects to him. Come, then, and I will introduce you. But no, there is another way. Go and ask Margaret to point him out to you, and exclaim immediately about the beauty of his features and person. That will be simple, spontaneous, and worth a great deal more than a studied eulogy."

"But why should my opinion, even supposing it to be sincere, have the slightest influence with your niece?"

"In Sweden, any one who has travelled has more

influence than two or three ordinary mortals. And then, don't you know that young girls don't understand their own natures; that it is vanity that impels them to choose their lovers, and not sympathy; and that the man, consequently, whom they admire the most, is always the one who is most admired by others? Stay! there is my niece seated with some other young ladies, who certainly would be very glad of a chance to win the baron. That will do nicely. I will leave her there, and you can join the circle. To give you an opportunity to fulfil your promise, I will take the baron's arm and walk up and down in full view of this solemn assembly. Seize the right moment."

"But what will the baron think if he happens to notice me? He will set me down as an awkward boor, too ignorant either to ask any one to introduce me to him, or to introduce myself."

"Don't trouble yourself; I will make it all right. Besides, the baron will not see you; he is very short-sighted, and only recognizes people by their voices. When he hunts he wears glasses, and sees perfectly well; but he is still too much of an exquisite to use them in society. It is all settled. Away with you!"

In another moment Cristiano was passing among the groups of beautiful young ladies who were reposing between the dances. He introduced himself to one of these little coteries by saying something polite to Mademoiselle Potin, who was next the wall, and who, poor girl, was very much gratified at his courtesy. Margaret was delighted to see him among the young men who surrounded her companions, and the latter soon learned from her that he was "a young man of great promise, nephew of the celebrated Goefle, the intimate friend of her aunt." Some of them turned up their noses, and thought it not at all the thing that a plebeian should venture to come and entertain them, among the young officers of the *indelta*,* who generally belonged

* A standing army, with an organization peculiar to Sweden, settled for life in each province.

to good families ; but most of them welcomed him kindly, and thought him charming.

The fact is, that Cristiano, like a great many adventurers in this adventurous age, was charming. His style of beauty, also — a singular coincidence that he had not thought of explaining — was precisely that best calculated to please in this country. He was tall and well formed, fair, with a clear red and white complexion, with dark blue eyes and strongly marked eyebrows, as black as ebony, as were his long curved lashes and magnificent hair. Moreover, there was a something peculiar about him that attracted attention : a sort of foreign style, a suavity in his language and manners telling of the more civilized, or, at least, the more artistic circles to which he had belonged ; a lingering perfume, as it were, of Italy and France. As soon as it was known that he had been brought up in Italy, he was overwhelmed with questions, to which he replied with so much good sense, frankness, and gayety, that after chatting for a little while, all these young madcaps were crazy about him. Cristiano, although by no means a fop, was not at all surprised. He had been used to pleasing in other days, and when he resolved to indulge once more, at all costs, in an evening's gayety, he knew, that unless his success should be seriously interfered with by some unexpected revelation, he would appear to better advantage than most of the young nobles and officers who were present.

In the meanwhile, the little Countess Elfride, who was leaning, or rather hanging upon the arm of the imposing Baron Olaus, had passed twice without catching Cristiano's eye. The third time she coughed violently, and led the baron up to Margaret, while Cristiano, who understood, broke away from the bewildering group and fell back, to observe his host without attracting his attention.

Baron Olaus was a tall, stout man, and, in spite of his age, was still very handsome, but the deadly pallor and sinister impassibility of his countenance made it really appalling. His fixed look struck you like a blast of

icy wind that takes the breath away, and the expression of his face when he smiled was extraordinarily sad and disdainful. As soon as he spoke to Margaret, Cristiano recognized him from his voice, which was disagreeably harsh and monotonous, as the very person who had been selling Sweden so cheap an hour before in his conferences with the Russian diplomatist. He recognized him also from his lofty stature and rich dark dress, which he had noticed while listening to him doing the honors of his country to the enemy.

"Have you fully determined not to dance, mademoiselle?" said the disagreeable baron to Margaret. "Are you suffering much?"

The countess did not give Margaret time to answer.

"Oh, it is nothing!" she said; "Margaret will dance soon."

She led the baron away, after looking again in a domineering manner at Cristiano. Now this is how he obeyed her:

"So that is Baron Olaus de Waldemora?" he said, approaching Margaret and Mademoiselle Potin, who had hastened to join the young girl at the approach of her chaperone.

"That is he!" replied Margaret, with a bitter smile. "What do you think of him?"

"He must have been quite handsome thirty years ago."

"That, at least," rejoined Margaret, with a sigh.

"Did you like his face?"

"Yes; I have a great admiration for cheerful faces. There is a certain gayety about his—"

"Is it not frightful?"

"What was that you said to my uncle?" said Cristiano, sitting down beside her chair, and lowering his voice; "did he kill his sister-in-law?"

"It is thought so."

"For my part, I am sure of it."

"Indeed! Why?"

"Because he must have looked at her!"

"Oh! Is it not true that he has the evil eye?"

"You exaggerate a little," said Mademoiselle Potin,

who no doubt had been terrified by some silent threat of Countess Elfride. "He has the fixed look of people who do not see well."

"Just so," said Cristiano; "death is blind. But who gave the baron the surname of *the Snow Man*? It suits him: he is the living embodiment of a Spitzbergen winter. He has given me a chill."

"And did you notice his curious habit?" said Margaret.

"He put his hand to his forehead as if to wipe off the perspiration; do you mean that?"

"Exactly."

"The Snow Man wants, perhaps, to make us believe that he is perspiring; but the simple truth is that he is thawing."

"You see that I had good cause to be afraid of him. And his black diamond—did you notice that?"

"Yes, I noticed the hideous black diamond, as he wiped his forehead with his fleshless hand; which forms such a singular contrast to his corpulent figure and bloated face."

"Whom are you talking about so?" said a young Russian lady, who had risen to spread out her gown over her hoop petticoat; "the Baron de Waldemora?"

"I was just about to say," said Cristiano, without being disconcerted, "that that worthy man has not three months to live."

"Oh, then," cried the Russian, laughing, "you must make haste to marry him, Margaret!"

"Keep your advice for yourself, Olga," replied the young countess.

"Alas! I have not, like you, an aunt who carries everything before her! But what makes you think, M. Goeffe, that the baron is so ill?"

"From the unhealthy disproportion of his figure, from the yellow white of his glassy eyes, from the pinched-in look at the base of his hooked nose, and, above all, from an indefinable feeling that came over me as soon as I saw him."

"Indeed! Are you gifted with the second sight, like the people in the north of this country?"

"I don't know anything about that. I don't consider myself a sorcerer; but I am quite satisfied that some organizations are more or less sensitive to certain mysterious influences, and I answer for it that the baron has not long to live."

"I think," said Margaret, "that he has been dead already for a long time; and that it is only by means of some diabolical secret that he succeeds in passing himself off for a living man."

"It is true that he looks like a spectre," said Olga; "but no matter, he is handsome in spite of his age, and he has a strange power of fascination. I dreamed about him all last night. I was frightened, and yet it was a pleasant fear. Can you explain that?"

"It is perfectly simple," replied Margaret, "the baron is a famous alchemist; he knows how to make diamonds. Now you told us this morning that you would sign a compact with the devil for diamonds."

"You are wicked, Margaret! Suppose I should tell others how you talk about the baron, and it should come to his ears; you would be vexed enough, I wager."

"Do you think so, Monsieur Goeffe?" said Margaret to Cristiano.

"No," he replied. "Why should angels care for diamonds? have they not the stars?"

Margaret blushed, and turned to the young Russian:

"My dear Olga," she said, "I implore you tell the baron yourself that I cannot endure him. You will be doing me a great service. Stay! I will prove my gratitude. There is the bracelet that you wanted so much! Make a quarrel between me and the baron, and I will agree to give it to you."

"Oh, dear me! but what will your aunt say?"

"I will tell her that I have lost it, and you must not wear it while you are here — no questions will be asked. See, the baron is returning! They are going to dance another minuet, and he is coming to invite me; but I shall refuse. My aunt is talking politics with the Rus-

sian ambassador, and will not see me. Stay by me, and he will have to ask you."

In fact, the baron came forward, and renewed his invitation with a sepulchral grace. Margaret trembled in every limb when he held out his hand to take hers.

"Countess Elveda informs me," he said, "that you would like to dance now, and I am going to have another minuet for you."

Margaret arose, took a step forward, and fell back in her chair.

"I should be glad to obey my aunt," she said firmly, "but you see, baron, that I cannot, and I do not suppose that you want to torture me."

The baron started. He was a man of intelligence, perfectly well-bred, and excessively suspicious. The countess had not deceived him so effectually that he was not capable of understanding the slightest hint, and Margaret's aversion was too evident to be mistaken. He smiled bitterly, and replied with sarcastic courtesy:

"You are a thousand times too good, mademoiselle, and I trust you will believe that I feel your kindness deeply."

He turned immediately to Olga, invited her, and led her away; while Margaret snatched the elegant bracelet from her arm, and slipped it into the ambitious young creature's hand.

"Monsieur Goeffe," she said to Cristiano, eagerly, although with a trembling voice, "you have brought me happiness. I am saved!"

"And yet you are pale," said Cristiano; "you are trembling."

"I cannot help it! I was so frightened. And I am frightened still, for I cannot help thinking how angry my aunt will be. But no matter, I have got rid of the baron. He will revenge himself; he will kill me, perhaps. But I shall not be his wife; I shall not bear his name. I shall never touch his blood-stained hand."

"Be quiet, for heaven's sake be quiet!" said Mademoiselle Potin, who was as pale and frightened as herself; "some one may hear you. You have been very brave,

and I congratulate you. But you are really timid, and all this excitement will make you ill. *Mon Dieu!* don't faint, my dear child. Take your smelling-bottle."

"Don't be afraid, my good friend," replied Margaret, "I have recovered. Did any one around see what happened? I am afraid to look."

"No, God be praised! The noise of the orchestra, which had just begun playing, drowned every other sound, and your young friends were hurrying away to the dance. We are almost alone in this corner. Don't stay here and attract attention. Above all things, avoid having a scene with your aunt while you are so excited. Come with me to your room; give me your arm."

"And shall I not see you again?" said Cristiano, with an emotion that he could not control.

"Yes, surely," replied Margaret, "I want to speak to you again. In an hour you will find us —"

"Where shall I find you?"

"I don't know. Oh yes! in the supper-room."

As Margaret withdrew, Cristiano left the hall by another door, and began to look for the place of rendezvous, so that he might be there promptly at the appointed hour. Besides, he had been suffering from hunger ever since he came to the ball, in spite of his interesting adventures, and the word supper-room aroused his appetite to full activity.

"If no one is there," he said to himself, "I shall make terrible inroad into the provisions of my lord baron."

While he is proceeding towards this sanctuary, let us see what was taking place in the drawing-room.

IV.

THE baron was certainly not fond of dancing, and his corpulence was by no means calculated to help him cut pigeon-wings; but in the "court-dances" which were usual at that period it was customary, and considered the proper thing to do, for even the gravest

persons to take a part. The baron, who had been a widower for a long time, had given scarcely any entertainments during the life of his lawful heir; but when it became apparent that his name was in danger of perishing with him, and that his titles and estates would pass to a branch of his family which he hated, he had promptly resolved to marry again as early as possible; and, in choosing a wife, he had made up his mind to select, not a suitable and agreeable companion, for he felt no need of such a person, but some healthy young girl from whom he might expect children. He had accordingly furnished his mansion in a luxurious style, and had assembled together the ladies of the province, with the sole design of placing his baronial coronet upon the head of the prettiest among them who should be so kind as to offer to wear it.

The Countess Elfride had thought herself sure of the prize, but her plans had failed. The elderly suitor opened his eyes to the fact that he had been made to look ridiculous, and swore to be revenged both upon aunt and niece. Moreover, to this oath, which he registered in his mind with much promptitude, he appended a firm resolve not to be deceived twice; but, without admitting the interference of any third party, to offer himself to the first young lady of good family who should receive him with a sufficient degree of cordiality. This person turned out to be Olga, as he felt convinced when that young lady proceeded to tell him, in a confidential whisper, how Margaret had made over to her all right, title, and interest in his affections. She confided this pretty story to him with an assumed air of innocence and candor, as if it were the prattle of a child; and, really, she was a child in many respects, though none the less a woman, at once possessed and made cunning by ambition. The baron, who was by no means wanting in penetration, kept up the joke as if he saw nothing more in it; but, at the end of the dance, instead of taking Olga to her seat, he offered her his arm, and led her into the gallery, whose great extent rendered it quite suitable for confidential interviews. There, taking her burning hands between his icy cold ones, he said coldly:

"Olga, you are young and beautiful, but you are poor, and of too high rank to marry a handsome young fellow of low birth. It rests with you to turn your jest into earnest. I offer you my title and a brilliant position. Answer me seriously and without delay, or otherwise dismiss this subject forever from your mind."

Olga was really young, beautiful, poor, vain, and ambitious. She took time by the forelock, and accepted at once.

"Very good," observed Olaus, kissing her hand, "I thank you. Excuse me if I say not a word further. I should make myself ridiculous if I should undertake to talk to you about love, for you would imagine that I think myself a person who can be loved. We will be married—that is settled; and we both of us have decisive reasons for this resolution—that is certain. In the meanwhile, in case you really desire this marriage, I must request you to keep it an absolute secret for some days, above all from the Countess Margaret and her aunt. Can you promise me this? Remember, any indiscretion would break off our engagement."

Olga had too much at stake not to give the required promise in good faith; and the baron handed her back to the great drawing-room.

Their absence had been so brief, that, even if observed, no particular conclusion could have been drawn from it. Yet the Countess d'Elveda felt uneasy at it, and went to find out what had become of her niece.

"Do not annoy yourself," remarked Olga, "she was here this very moment."

"She is hiding herself—she is still obstinate about dancing."

"By no means," said the baron, "she had consented to dance. It was I who declined to take advantage of her kindness."

And offering his arm to the countess, he walked away with her, explaining, as they went, that he did not wish any one to be constrained to love him; that he was old enough to pay his addresses for himself, and that he begged her not to interpose further in the matter, lest she

should be the means of his losing all hope, and even of his giving up his design of marrying.

The countess consoled herself for this reprimand, by the recollection that it was the first time the baron had shown any decided purpose of seeking her niece's hand. Intriguing and perfidious as she was, she was this time the dupe of the baron, whose only object was to deceive her as she had deceived him.

"It is astonishing," said Cristiano to himself, as he set out to find the supper-room, "to watch these intriguers in high life, to see how foolish they are in their malignity, and how easily they are deceived! But that must necessarily be the case in matters of that kind, when one lays down the principle, to begin with, of absolute contempt for the human species. We cannot despise others without despising ourselves. He who does not think well of the work he is doing is made impotent by that very fact. It was a superb piece of comedy for that aunt to tell me so calmly, 'I have a niece to immolate; help me about it; be quick, and I will pay you by giving you a position as head valet in a good family!'"

Cristiano, however, put aside his philosophic reflections as he entered the room he was looking after, which he discovered by a really delicious odor of venison. It was a very handsome circular room, laid with small movable tables, with a view of temporarily assuaging impatient appetites while waiting for the grand supper. As everybody had done great honor to the baron's table already at nine o'clock, the room was empty, except for one servant, who was fast asleep, and whom Cristiano took pains not to waken, lest he should be considered greedy and ill-mannered. Without stopping to select, he seized a plate of stuffed veal à la Française; but just as he made a cut into it with the vermilion-handled knife, the servant, startled out of his sleep, sprang up as if he had been moved by springs, and M. Stangstadius bustled in, rattling the glasses and crockery with the jar which his uneven, jerking step communicated to the floor.

"*Parbleu!* It's you, is it?" he called out, on seeing Cristiano. "Glad to find you here! I don't like to eat

alone, and we can talk over serious matters while we satisfy the blind appetites of these poor human machines of ours. Pooh! you don't mean to eat standing? Oh no! It's extremely unfavorable to the digestion, and you don't taste what you eat at all. Here, Karl, draw out that table—the largest. Very good. Now then, give us some of the best there is. How? Side-dishes? No, not yet. Something more solid; some good slices of that sirloin. After that you can bring the best cut out of that bear's ham. It's a Norway ham, I hope; they are the best smoked. Come, Karl, some wine! Give us some Madeira and Bordeaux, and you may bring a few bottles of champagne, too, for this young man; he's likely to be fond of it. Very well, Karl. That'll do, my boy; but don't go, we shall want some dessert very shortly."

While giving these orders, M. Stangstadius installed himself with his back to the stove, and applied himself to eating and drinking after so marvellous a fashion, that Cristiano cast away all shame, and began devouring with the whole force of his thirty-two teeth. As for the man of science, who had not more than a dozen, he manœuvred them so ably that he was not a whit behindhand, while all the while he continued talking and gesticulating with wonderful energy. Cristiano, astonished, inwardly compared him to some fantastic monster, half crocodile and half ape; and asked himself where could be the seat of this terrible vitality in a body so misshapen, apparently so feeble, and with diverging eyes incessantly moving, but with no expression whatever.

The conversation of the geologist soon did something to help solve the problem. The worthy gentleman had never loved a human being, nor even so much as a dog. Everything was perfectly indifferent to him beyond the circle of ideas in which he lived, so to speak, on himself; taking his own pleasure, admiring himself, flattering himself, and, in default of better material, finding nourishment in the perfumes of his own self-praise.

Cristiano felicitated him upon his magnificent health.

"Do you see, my dear fellow," he replied, "when God made me he came to a full stop. I swear to you he could

not have produced such another ! I know nothing of the sufferings that others feel. To begin with, I have never known the vulgar and despicable infirmity of love. I never wasted one minute in my life in forgetting myself for one of those pretty dolls that you make idols of. A woman may be eighty or eighteen — it's exactly the same to me. When I am hungry, if I am in a hovel, I eat whatever I can find, and if I find nothing, I occupy myself in thinking over my works ; and I wait, without any uneasiness. If I am at a good table, I eat everything there is on it, and without feeling any inconvenience. I feel neither cold nor heat. My head is always burning, it is true ; but it is with a sublime fire that does not consume the mechanism, but, on the contrary, nourishes and repairs it. I know neither hate nor envy. I am perfectly aware that no one knows more than I ; and as to those who are jealous of me — there are a vast many of them — I crush them like the worms of the dust. They never recover after a criticism from me. In short, I am made of steel, gold, and diamond ; I defy the entrails of the whole earth to supply a material more impassible or more precious than that of which I am made."

At this comprehensive and frank declaration Cristiano could not help an immoderate explosion of laughter, which, however, did not at all disconcert or offend the Chevalier of the Polar Star. On the contrary, he took this hilarity to be a joyous homage to his own universal superiority ; so that Cristiano perceived that his companion was, in some sense, a monomaniac of a curious species, whose infirmity might be defined as lunacy from excess of self-conceit. Cristiano questioned him in vain about such persons as interested him. As to the Baron de Waldemora, M. Stangstadius would only condescend to say that he had some aspirations towards science, but that, on the whole, he was simply an idiot. Margaret he set down as stupid for not accepting the first rich match that came along. He did, it is true, spare her a little, admitting that she must be more amiable than the rest of them, since she was in love with him. This he thought a proof of good sense, but he found it impossible to profit

by this disposition of hers, since science was his wife and mistress at the same time.

"Really, Mr. Professor," said Cristiano, "you seem to be admirably consistent in this wonderful logical system of yours."

"Ah! I'll answer for that," replied M. Stangstadius; "I'm a different sort of man from your Baron Olaus, whom fools admire for his strength of will and coolness!"

"My baron? I assure you that I want nothing to do with him."

"For my part I speak neither well nor ill of him," returned the professor; "all men are poor creatures, more or less; but does he not pretend to be a free-thinker, and to have never loved?"

"Could he have ever really loved any one? If he could, his face is extremely deceptive."

"I don't know but he may have loved his wife, while she lived. She was a malignant she-devil."

"Perhaps, then, he admired her."

"I'm sure I don't know. She managed him, however, as she chose; and after she was dead, he could not endure to be without her, and so he came to engage me to calcine and crystallize her ladyship, the baroness."

"Ah! then the famous black diamond is your work?"

"You have seen it, then! Is it not a capital result of experiment! The lapidary who cut it was in perfect despair at not being able to discover whether it was the work of nature or of art. But I must tell you the method I pursued, and how I secured its transparency. I took *my body* and wrapped it in asbestos cloth, after the manner of the ancients, and placed it over an extremely hot fire of wood, coal, and bitumen, the whole well sprinkled with naphtha. When *my body* was thoroughly reduced —"

Cristiano, finding himself condemned to undergo the history of the reduction and vitrification of the baroness, set about eating as fast as he could, and tried not to hear; but he had perfectly stuffed himself before the professor had ended his demonstration. This meeting was a sad disappointment to Cristiano, who had hoped for an interview with only Margaret and her governess. And

he became more dissatisfied still, as a group of young officers of the *indelta* invaded the hall.

These northern stomachs were far from being satisfied with the refreshments and cooling beverages provided in the ball-room, and so they came hither to warm their blood a little with good Spanish and French wine; and Cristiano observed with interest something peculiar in the way in which these men of the north drank their wine, and which he had never been able to notice to so good advantage. He began, moreover, to see something a little rude in their manners, and a rather rougher style of gayety than he found himself quite able to join in. But to make amends, the free-heartedness and cordiality of the young men were such as he entirely sympathized with. They all greeted him with eager kindness, and insisted on his drinking with them, until he found his head beginning to feel the liquor. He therefore stopped, fearing to go too far, but admiring the ease with which these robust sons of the mountains went straight on drinking the heady wine, without apparently feeling it at all.

As soon as he could disengage himself from their friendly challenges, he took up a position near the door, in order to go out whenever he should perceive Margaret in the gallery outside. He supposed that when she saw the room full of young men drinking she would not go in. She however did go in, notwithstanding, and in a few moments was followed by other young ladies and their cavaliers, who took seats at different tables, those already sitting there hastening to give them places, and to wait upon them. And now the mirth began to be louder and more enthusiastic. They forgot to imitate Versailles; they talked Swedish, and even Dalecarlian: the voices grew loud; the young ladies drank champagne without making any faces over it, and even took Cyprus wine and port, without any fear of the consequences. There were present brothers and sisters, betrothed lovers, and cousins. It was like one numerous family; and the sexes mingled with a freedom which was innocent, warm-hearted, per-

haps a little inelegant, but, on the whole, touching, from its chastity and simplicity.

"What good souls they are!" thought Cristiano. "What the devil is the reason that as soon as they begin to think about themselves they attitudinize as Russians or French, when they appear to so much better advantage in their own natural character?"

The peculiar charm of the little Countess Margaret was exactly that she was herself in whatever circumstances. Mademoiselle Potin had certainly formed her most judiciously, in thus preserving her natural and spontaneous. And what Cristiano found especially agreeable in her was, that she declined wine. Cristiano had some prejudices.

While the rest were all chattering and laughing around Stangstadius, — whose table, always in the same place, and always copiously served, became the centre and target of witticisms, by which he was not at all disconcerted, — Margaret found an opportunity of telling Cristiano in a confidential manner, which, as may be imagined, did not displease him, that her aunt had quite changed her demeanor to her, and, instead of finding fault, had become very good-natured.

"It must be," she said, "that the baron has not mentioned my discourtesy; or else she knows of it, but means to try a different way to bring me into her plans. At any rate, I have a breathing-time. The baron is not attentive to me any more; and even if I am to be scolded again by my aunt to-morrow, or sent back for penance to my solitude at Dalby, I mean to enjoy myself to-night, and forget all my vexations. Yes, I intend to dance as gayly as I can; for, if you will believe it, Mousieur Goefle, this is the first ball I ever attended in my life; the first time I ever danced anywhere, except in my own room, with my good Potin. I am positively dying to try my little accomplishments in public; and I am frightened to death, at the same time, for fear of being awkward, and getting out in the figures of the French quadrille. I must find some obliging partner who will help me

through, and look after me a little, so as to tell me all my mistakes in a charitable way."

"I believe it will not be difficult to find him," replied Cristiano; "and if you will venture to trust yourself to me, I guarantee that you shall dance as if you were at your hundredth ball."

"Well, then, agreed. I accept, with thanks. Let us wait till twelve o'clock. We will make up a little separate ball all by ourselves, with these ladies and gentlemen here, at one end of the gallery. Then, perhaps, my aunt, who is dancing in the grand saloon with all the great people, will not see how suddenly my sprain has got well."

Cristiano now began a brisk conversation with the young lady; and, being a little stimulated by the champagne, his gayety was gradually taking on a sentimental complexion, when a name, pronounced aloud close to him, made him start and turn around suddenly.

"Christian Waldo!" said a young officer, with an open and good-natured face; "who has seen him? where is he?"

"To be sure!" cried Cristiano, jumping up. "Where is Christian Waldo? Who has seen him?"

"Nobody," answered some one from another table. "Who has ever seen Christian Waldo's face, and who will ever see it?"

"You have never seen it, have you, Monsieur Goeffe?" asked Margaret of Cristiano. "You do not know him?"

"No. But who is Christian Waldo, and how is it that it is impossible to see his face?"

"You must have heard him spoken of though, for his name seemed to strike you."

"Yes, because I remember having heard it at Stockholm; but I did not pay much attention to it, and I do not even remember —"

"Come, major," said a young lieutenant, "since you know this Waldo, tell us who he is, and what he does. I do not know anything about him."

"Major Larrson knows a great deal if he can do that," said Margaret. "For my part, I have heard so many different things said about Christian Waldo, that I prom-

ise beforehand not to believe a word of anything that is going to be told."

"But," replied the major, "I am ready to make oath, upon my honor, that I say nothing about him except what I absolutely know. Christian Waldo is an Italian comedian, who travels about from one town to another, amusing people by his good-natured wit and inexhaustible gayety. His exhibition consists —"

"We know that," interrupted Margaret, "and we know that he gives his representations sometimes in drawing-rooms and sometimes in taverns; to-day in a castle, and to-morrow in a hovel; and that he makes the rich pay high prices, while he often exhibits to the poor for nothing."

"An absurd original enough," said Cristiano; "a kind of mountebank."

"Mountebank or not, he is an extraordinary man," replied the major, "and a man of genuine nobility of character, too, which is more! Last month, at Stockholm, I myself saw him fight three furious drunken sailors, one of whom had been cruelly abusing a poor cabin-boy, when Christian Waldo, indignant at the cowardly outrage, rescued his victim. On another occasion, this Christian threw himself into the midst of a fire to save an old woman; and every day he gave away almost all he received to persons who excited his pity. Indeed, it was said that the people of the suburbs were so enthusiastic about him, that he had to leave secretly in order to avoid being carried in a triumphal procession."

"And also," observed Margaret, "to avoid being obliged to remove his mask; for the authorities began to feel uneasy about an incognito so very popular, and they fancied he might be some Russian agent who was preparing the ground in this way, so that when the time came he could excite a sedition."

"Do you believe," said Cristiano, "that this funny fellow—for it appears that he is a funny fellow—is a Russian spy?"

"I? No, I don't believe it," replied Margaret. "I

am not one of those people who prefer to think that goodness and charity cover wicked designs."

"But his mask," said one of the young ladies, who had been eagerly listening to the officers; "why does he always wear a black mask when he enters his theatre and leaves it? Is it to represent the Italian harlequin?"

"No, for he does not appear himself in the representation which he exhibits to the public. There is some reason, which no person knows."

"Perhaps," observed Cristiano, gravely, "it is to hide a leprosy, or something of the kind."

"Some say his nose is cut off," remarked one of the young people.

"And others, again," added a third, "say that he is the handsomest young fellow in the world; and that he has permitted himself to be seen in the faubourg, and by some persons with whom he has formed a friendship."

"It would appear," resumed the major, "that he does not wear his mask at all within his own establishment; but reports are very conflicting about his face. A young boatwoman, who was almost ill with curiosity, managed to induce him to remove the mask, and fell quite ill with fright at seeing a death's head."

"Certainly this Waldo must be the devil himself," said Margaret, "if he can appear as a handsome young man or a frightful spectre. Young ladies, don't you all want to see him?"

"Do you, Margaret?"

"Let's all confess that we are wild to see him, and that at the same time we are terribly afraid!"

"They say he is coming here, do they not?" asked one of the young girls.

"He is here now, according to the latest accounts," answered the major.

"What, really?" cried Margaret; "has he come already? Shall we see him? Is he in the ball-room now?"

"Oh," said Cristiano, "that would be rather a difficult matter."

"Difficult? Why?"

"Because a mountebank would not venture to present himself in the character of an invited guest, among such a company as this."

"Bah!" said the major; "it seems the fellow is not afraid to do anything. His mask, his exhibition, and his name, belong together; but it is asserted, and it seems quite probable, that, under another name, and without any mask, he comes and goes as he likes, and goes all over Stockholm; and that, in the public promenades and most frequented taverns, those who talk about him can never be certain that he is not just at their elbow, or perhaps the very person they are speaking to."

"But then," said Cristiano, "how do we know that he is not even in this very room?"

"Oh no!" answered Margaret, though not until she had glanced all round the room, "all of us who are here know each other."

"But I? No one knows me? Perhaps I am Christian Waldo!"

"Then where is your death's head?" said one of the young girls, laughing. "Without either mask or death's head, you are only an apocryphal Waldo. And by the way, gentlemen, can any one tell us how it is known that he has arrived?"

"I can tell you," replied the major, "how I found it out myself. It seems that an unknown person applied for accommodations here, and, the house being full, was directed to the farm-house. He gave his name, and showed the letter in which Johan, the major-domo, by order of his master, the baron, invited him hither for the amusement of the guests here assembled. I don't know whether they have accommodated him in some corner of the chateau or elsewhere; but it is certain that he has come."

"Who told you so?"

"The major-domo himself."

"And he wore his mask?"

"He wore his mask."

"And is he tall or fat? well formed or bandy?"

"I did not ask any of those questions; for as I saw

him with my own eyes at Stockholm — masked, it is true — I know him to be tall, well made, and as lithe as a deer."

"Probably he may be some ex-rope-dancer," suggested Cristiano, who appeared to take no more interest in the conversation than politeness required.

"Oh no!" said Margaret; "he has received a capital education. Everybody is struck by the style and wit of his comedies."

"But how do you know that they are his own?"

"People familiar with all the ancient and modern literatures, assert that nothing in them is stolen; and these little comedies of his — sometimes sentimental, it is said, also — have been a real literary event at Stockholm."

"Will he exhibit to-morrow, do you think?" was asked on every side.

"It is to be presumed," replied the major, "but if these young ladies are desirous to know, I shall be very happy to undertake to find him out and inquire."

"At midnight?" said Cristiano, looking at the clock. "The poor devil is asleep. I believe the Countess Margaret had a more important plan to suggest to the company."

"Yes, indeed," cried Margaret. "I want to propose a little ball, all to ourselves. I am a new comer here — a perfect savage, I confess; you have only met me within these two or three days; but every one has been so kind and good to me, that I am not afraid to confess — what M. Goefle will be so good as to tell you —"

"This is it," said Cristiano. "The Countess Margaret, as she herself just told you, is a perfect savage. She knows nothing in the world, not even how to dance; she is as awkward as possible, and limps at least as much as our illustrious master Stangstadius. Besides, she is clumsy, absent-minded, short-sighted. In fact, it would require a most Christian dose of charity to reconcile one's self to the idea of dancing with her; for —"

"Enough! enough!" cried Margaret, laughing. "You have done me the honor to describe me with a great deal

of humility. Please to accept my thanks, however; for they will all expect something so frightful now, that if I succeed only tolerably well everybody will be enchanted with me. The end of the matter is that I wish to make my first appearance before this small party; and that—if you all say so—we will go and dance in the gallery. The music in the grand saloon will be abundantly loud enough for us to dance by.”

Several of the young men hastened towards Margaret, to ask for her hand. She thanked them, but said that M. Christian Goeffe had already devoted himself to be the victim.

“It is quite true, gentlemen,” said Cristiano, gayly, as his gloved hand received the little hand of Margaret; “all please to pity me, and so lead on to the torture.”

Places were taken in an instant, and the quadrille was formed. Margaret begged not to be one of the first four.

“You are curiously agitated,” said Cristiano to her.

“I am,” she replied; “my heart beats as if I were a bird launched out of the nest for the first time, and not quite sure that it has wings at all.”

“The first quadrille,” remarked the adventurer, “is, I see, an important event in the life of a young lady. In a year from now, when you have attended a hundred balls or so, do you suppose you will remember at all the name and face of the humble individual who enjoys the happiness and glory of directing your first dance?”

“Yes, certainly, Monsieur Goeffe; the recollection will always be joined to that of the greatest emotions of my life: my fear of the baron, and my joy at being delivered from him, by an effort of courage that I should not have believed myself capable of, and with which I was certainly inspired by your uncle and yourself.”

“But do you know,” said Cristiano, “I am not at all certain of your aversion for the baron?”

“Why not?”

“You are assuredly much more frightened about dancing in public than you were about dancing with him.”

"Yet I did not dance with him, and I am going to dance with you!"

Cristiano involuntarily pressed Margaret's small fingers; but she thought this merely an intimation that it was time for her to take her place, and, all rosy with pleasure and bashfulness, she stepped forward with him into the joyous circle, where she very quickly found herself entirely at her ease, as her grace and lightness entitled her to be.

"Well, I believe I am not afraid any more," she said; as they returned to their place, while the other four began the first figure.

"You are a great deal too courageous," replied Cristiano; "I hoped I should have been of some service, but you have learned so fast how to use your wings, that now you will be flying off with the first comer."

"It will never be with the baron, though! But tell me why it was that you thought I exaggerated my dislike for him?"

"*Mon Dieu!* I see that you are passionately fond of balls—that is, of entertainments and luxury; and every passion is followed by certain consequences. Now, if pleasure is the object, wealth is the means of securing it."

"What? Am I so silly and so homely that I shall never make a rich marriage unless with an old man?"

"Then you admit that you will not marry any one but a rich man?"

"If I should say yes, what would you think of me?"

"I should not think ill of you."

"I know; I should be doing just as so many others do; and you would not think well of me either."

This rather delicate discussion was resumed at the third pause of the quartette to which our two young friends belonged. Margaret seemed to want to test Cristiano's sincerity.

"Confess, now," she said, "that you despise girls who marry for riches; like Olga, for instance, to whom the baron looks so handsome through the facets of the great diamonds that she dreams about."

"I despise nothing," replied the adventurer; "I am naturally tolerant, or else the facets of what virtue I have

are dulled by friction with the world. I am enthusiastic for what is superior to the average; and I feel a philosophical indifference to whatever is adapted to the vulgar generality of people."

"Enthusiastic, do you say? Is not enthusiasm a high price to pay for a thing so natural as disinterestedness? I shall not demand so much of you, Monsieur Goeffe; I shall only ask your esteem. I hope you will believe that if I were free to choose, I would consult my heart alone, and not my interest. Even if I could never have any more lace to my sleeves, or satin bows to my dress—even if I could never dance any more in the light of a thousand candles, to the sound of thirty violins, hautboys, and double-basses—I feel that I am capable of making even so immense a sacrifice as that, for the sake of preserving my freedom of opinion and the approbation of my conscience."

Margaret spoke with enthusiasm. Excited by the dancing, she said just what was in her heart: all the generosity and romance of her nature shone in her brilliant eyes; there was a sort of electrical life and inspiration in her radiant smile; in her attitude, like that of a bird eager to dart upwards again to the clouds; in her lovely fair hair, whose long curls wreathed over her lily-white shoulders as if they were alive; in the heart-felt tone of her voice—in short, in the whole of her charming little person. Cristiano was altogether dazzled, and, without being entirely conscious of what he was saying, he asked Margaret, as if he were dreaming, this strange question:

"You will never permit yourself to love any one not of your own rank, I know. But suppose that, in spite of yourself, you should find your affections drawn towards some poor devil, a person without a name, without a penny—Christian Waldo, for instance—would you not be extremely mortified, and consider it your duty to stifle your inclinations?"

"Christian Waldo!" said Margaret. "Why Christian Waldo? You choose a very strange person as an example!"

"Extremely so, and I do it on purpose. When one proceeds by an antithesis — But come; this is what I mean. Suppose that this Christian Waldo — whom I do not know at all — really possesses the courage, the intelligence, the generosity that have just been attributed to him here; and in addition to his other endowments, the poverty which must be the faithful attendant of his wanderings; and a name which, I presume, he does not claim in virtue of any old parchments."

"And with his death's head —"

"No, without his death's head. Well, suppose that you had no choice of marriage, except between him and the Baron de Waldemora —"

"My choice would be very easily made. I would not marry at all!"

"Unless, of course, it should turn out that Christian's mask concealed a young and handsome prince, who was obliged to conceal himself for reasons of state?"

"A fine idea that is!" said Margaret; "another Czarewitch Ivan escaped out of his prison, or another Philip III. escaped from his assassins!"

"In that case, apocryphal or not, he would find grace in your eyes."

"What do you want me to say? An Italian buffoon is really not a good standard of comparison; if you are in earnest."

"Too true," replied Cristiano, "and here is the finale; let us tread it lightly, for it is the handful of earth cast upon the romance entitled 'The First Quadrille'!"

But it was not ordained that this quadrille should end according to choregraphic laws. M. Stangstadius, having at last finished the copious repast, which he called a mere snack between the supper and the after-supper, just at this moment came out from the refreshment-room. Absorbed in some lofty conception awakened in his mind by the agreeable effort of prosperous digestion, and coming upon the young dancers in his progress, he marched unceremoniously straight through them, running against the cavaliers who were just exhibiting their

graces in the "forward two," and treading on the little feet of the ladies as if they had been so many pebbles. His extravagant limping rendered his gait so ridiculous that every one burst out laughing. The dance was quite broken up; and the young couples, taking hold of each other's hands, executed a rapid and noisy *rondo* about the chevalier of the polar star, who, not wishing to be behind the others in grace, undertook to execute a hopping movement in the opposite direction, to the immense amusement of the company. But, sad to tell, the laughing and singing became so noisy as to attract attention in the grand saloon.

The orchestra had come to a pause in the music, but the young people did not notice it, and kept on singing and dancing around Staugstadius, who compared himself to Saturn in the middle of his ring.

Countess Elfride hastened to the spot, and, beholding the sudden cure of her niece, fell into a rage, which this time she could not restrain.

"My dear Margaret," she said, shortly, in a sharp tone, "you are exceedingly imprudent. You forget your sprain; it is extremely dangerous to go on in such a way. I have just seen the baron's physician, and he prescribes entire quiet to-night. Have the goodness to retire at once with your governess. She will assist you to go to bed, and put on some compresses. Believe me, you had best do so."

She added in a low tone—

"Obey me!"

Margaret, who had been rosy with delight, turned quite pale, and, whether from anger or mortification, could not restrain two great tears which glittered a moment on her long eye-lashes, and rolled down her cheeks. The Countess Elfride snatched her hand and carried her off, saying, in an under-tone:

"I think you have taken an oath to do nothing to-night but make a fool of yourself. Now you must pay for it. I excused you for not dancing with our entertainer, for he really believes you were in pain; but after that, to dance with another person is to offer the baron an un-

heard-of, deliberate insult, and I will not allow you to keep up such conduct until he has perceived it."

Cristiano followed along behind Margaret, trying to think of some means of disarming or diverting the wrath of her aunt, if he should perceive any favorable moment for addressing her, when he saw the baron approaching, and paused, leaning against the pedestal of a statue, to see what would take place among the three.

"What!" said the baron, "you are taking away your niece? It is too early. I thought she was just beginning to enjoy herself in my house. Permit me to beseech your indulgence for her; and since she has been dancing—as I am told—may I now beg her to dance with me? She certainly cannot refuse me now, and I am sure she will consent with pleasure."

"If you insist upon it, baron, I consent," said the countess.

"Come, Margaret, thank the baron, and go with him. Do you not see that he is offering you his arm for the polonaise?"

Margaret seemed to hesitate; her eyes met those of Cristiano, who did not know which feeling predominated—his desire to have her remain, or his fear that she would yield. Perhaps the last sentiment was most distinctly expressed in his looks, for Margaret answered steadily that she was engaged.

"To whom, pray?" cried the countess.

"Yes; to whom?" repeated the baron, with a singular inflection in his voice, and with a calmness that, Margaret thought, had something ominous in it.

She looked down, and was silent; for she did not understand what was passing in the mind of her persecutor, from whom she had thought herself quite safe.

The baron's only object was to torment her and compromise her. He saw perfectly well her aversion for him, and cordially reciprocated it. Coldly hard-hearted and revengeful, he affected to jest; but said, speaking loud enough to be heard by many inquisitive ears:

"Where is the happy mortal with whom I must dispute you? for I certainly will do it. I have the right."

"You have the right?" exclaimed Margaret, amazed and indignant; "you, baron?"

"Yes, I," he answered, with cold, cruel irony; "you know very well I have. Come, where is this rival who is going to carry you off to dance from under my very beard?"

"Here!" exclaimed Cristiano, losing his self-control, and advancing upon the baron in a threatening manner, while all the spectators, stupefied into silence, looked on with curiosity and amazement.

It was very well known that the baron, in spite of his sluggish and blasé manner, was extremely irascible, and indomitably proud. Every one expected a violent scene; and, in fact, a greenish pallor overspread instantaneously the baron's face, and he opened and shut his large and short-sighted eyes, as if to emit a flash of lightning for the annihilation of the audacious unknown who defied him so openly. But instantly the blood rushed back to his forehead, on which one large, engorged vein rose like a ridge, while his lips became more livid than the rest of his face. An indistinct cry escaped him, his arms extended convulsively, and he fell forward, exclaiming:

"There it is! There it is!"

He would have fallen upon the floor, had not twenty arms interposed. He had fainted; and they carried him to a window, and unceremoniously broke the panes to give him fresh air. Olga made her way through the crowd to bear him assistance. Margaret disappeared as if her aunt had whisked her off by conjuration; and Cristiano was rapidly led away by Major Osmund Larsson, who had taken a great liking to him.

"Come along with me," said the good-natured young fellow; "I must speak with you."

In a few moments Cristiano and Osmund were alone in an antique room on the ground-floor, warmed by an immense fire-place.

"We can smoke here," said the major. "Here's a rack, well filled; suit yourself with a pipe, and here's the tobacco. That beer on the table is the best in the

country, and here's some capital old Dantzic brandy. My comrades will be down in a moment to tell us the latest news of the affair."

"My dear major," said Cristiano, "I see you think me extremely angry, but you are mistaken. Let the baron get over his attack; I will smoke here with you until he is ready for an explanation."

"But for what purpose? to fight a duel?" said the major. "Bah! The baron never fights; he never has fought. You do not know him at all, then?"

"Not at all," said Cristiano, calmly, as he smoked his pipe, and poured out a large goblet of beer. "Have I really, like a true Don Quixote, attacked a windmill? I did not know that I was making such a fool of myself."

"You have done nothing of the kind, my dear friend. Quite the contrary, many persons will think that you have been exceedingly audacious to oppose the Snow Man; and certainly that is my opinion."

"I should have thought that a man of snow would easily thaw."

"That is not the case in this country. Men of that kind remain standing a long time."

"I have been heroic, then, without knowing it."

"You must try and not find it out at your own expense. The baron does not fight, it is true; but he takes his revenge for all that, and he never forgets an injury. It doesn't matter where you may be, he will pursue you with his hate; and it doesn't matter what career you may want to follow, he will put obstacles in your way. If you get into some difficulty, as may happen to any high-spirited young fellow, he will contrive to make it dangerous for you; and if he once has you thrown into prison, there you will remain. My advice to you, therefore, is to depart at once, and to remain constantly on your guard as long as you live; at least, unless the devil chooses to wring the neck of his crony this very night, under the pretence of a fit of apoplexy."

"Do you think the baron so ill?" inquired Cristiano.

"We shall soon know all about it. Here is my lieu-

tenant, Erwin Osburn, who is my best friend, and who likes you as well as I do. How now, lieutenant, what is the latest news of the Snow Man? Are there any signs that the thaw is approaching?"

"No, it turns out to be nothing at all," replied the lieutenant; "or, anyhow, so he pretends. He went to his room for a moment, and returned with such a good color, that I suspect him of daubing his pale cheeks with rouge. His eyes are dull, however, and he hesitates in speaking. I was curious enough to go up to him; and taking this as a mark of respect, he condescended to inform me that it was his wish that the dancing should go on, and that people should pay no further attention to him. He is seated in the grand drawing-room, and what convinces me that he is more uncomfortable than he confesses is, that he seems entirely to have forgotten the outbreak of rage that threw him into this fine state, and that nobody ventures to remind him of it."

"Then the ball will go on," said the major, "and you will see that it will be gayer than ever. It seems as if the people here wanted to shake off the thought of some approaching catastrophe, or as if the baron's heirs could not contain their joy at finding that he is really ill, and has been so for some time. But you must tell us one thing, Christian Goefle. Under what form did you appear to the baron? or what spell did you cast over him? Are you a ghost or a sorcerer? Are you the *man of the lake*, who fascinates people with a look of his icy eyes? What is there in common between the baron and yourself, and why is it that he should have uttered, in swooning, his famous exclamation, which I heard to-day for the first time: 'There it is! there it is!'"

"I wish you would explain it to me," replied Cristiano; "for I have been trying in vain to recall where I could have seen him; if we ever did meet, the circumstances must have been very insignificant, since my memory of them is so confused. Let me see, has he been travelling in France or Italy since —"

"Oh, it is a long, long time since he left the north!"

"I am mistaken, then; I have never seen the baron

before to-day. And yet one would have said that he recognized me. May he not have been delirious when he cried: 'There it is! there it is!'"

"Oh, that is a sure thing," said the major. "I have a gardener in my *bostoelle*,* who was at one time one of his servants, and who has told me a good many curious things about him. The baron is subject to violent attacks, which his physician calls nervous attacks, and which come from a chronic liver complaint. While these spells last, he sometimes shows signs of the strangest fear. He, the sceptic, the jeering infidel, is as cowardly as a child. He sees ghosts, especially that of a woman, and it is at such moments that he cries: 'There it is! there it is!' meaning, I suppose, 'There, my fit is seizing me!' or, perhaps, 'There is the ghost that haunts me!'"

"He seems to be tormented by remorse."

"Some say it is the recollection of his sister-in-law."

"Whom he assassinated?"

"They don't say that he killed her, but merely that he caused her to *disappear*."

"Yes, that is a more elegant expression."

"It is quite possible that there is no foundation for either story," resumed the major. "The fact is that we don't know anything at all about it, and that the baron is perhaps perfectly innocent of a great many crimes of which he is accused. You know that we are living here on the classical soil of the marvellous. The Dalecarlians have the greatest horror of anything practical, and of natural explanations. You cannot strike against a stone in this country, without supposing that a goblin pushed it against you on purpose; if your nose itches, you must run to a sibyl to be cured of a dwarf's poisonous bite;

* The *bostoelle* of the officers of the *indelta* is a house and lands, which they have the use of, and whose rent is proportioned to their rank. This rent is their salary. The minister's house is also called his *bostoelle*, and the minister has the use of it besides his other perquisites. The soldier of the *indelta* has his *torp*, his little house with a garden and a few acres of land. The *indelta* is a rural army, whose excellent organization was formed by Charles XII., and to which there is nothing analogous elsewhere.

nor is there a driver who will mend the broken trace of a carriage or sleigh without saying, 'Come, come, little goblin, leave us alone ; we are not doing you any harm.'

"You can readily imagine that the Baron de Waldemora could not become very rich, in the midst of such a superstitious people, without being considered an alchemist. Instead of supposing him to be paid by the empress for sustaining her political interests, it was thought more natural to accuse him of magic ; and from this accusation to that of the blackest crimes there is only a single step. Every sorcerer drowns his victims in waterfalls, buries them in abysses, rides avalanches, attends the witches' Sabbath, and at the very least eats human flesh, being thought quite moderate in his ferocious appetites if he only sucks the blood of infants. For my part, I have heard so many stories that I discredit them all, and confine myself to believing what I know ; and what I know is, that the baron is a wicked man, too cowardly to strike another man ; too well-fed and fastidious to drink blood ; too cold-blooded to lie in wait for travellers under frozen lakes ; but quite capable of sending his best friend to the gallows, if he had any personal interest in doing so, and had only to utter some wicked calumny to accomplish his purpose."

"He is a great villain !" said Cristiano. "But allow me to express my surprise at seeing so many respectable persons at his house —"

"You are right," replied Osmund, without giving him time to continue. "We are unquestionably to blame for coming to amuse ourselves at the entertainments of a man whom we all hate. You have for an excuse that you don't know him, but as for the rest of us —"

"I did not make any personal allusions," rejoined Cristiano.

"I know it, my dear fellow ; but you should not be surprised to find that a tyrant has a court. You are, of course, familiar with the history of your country ; but as you have been absent a number of years, you may have thought that the progress of philosophy has established a little equality between the different orders of the state. It is not so at all, Christian Goefle, not at all ; as

you will soon see with your own eyes. The nobility is all-powerful; then comes the clergy, enlightened and austere, but also tyrannical and intolerant. The bourgeoisie, so useful in the state, and so patriarchal in their manners, count for little, the peasantry for nothing at all, and the king for less than nothing. When a nobleman is rich, which luckily is very rare, he controls the interests and destinies of his whole province, and he either makes men do as he chooses or ruins them. You may rest assured that this would be the case with us young officers, if we should offer any discourtesy to the illustrious Seigneur de Waldemora. It is true that he could not deprive us of our rank, which can only be forfeited in case of actual crime; but, in spite of the inviolable laws of the indelta, we should be forced, by unheard-of persecutions, to abandon our cantonments, houses, estates and friends, as if we were a simple garrison."

At this moment two other young men came in to smoke, and Cristiano ventured to ask them whether Countess Elfride had returned to the ball-room.

"You are a sly fellow!" replied one of them; "you will not persuade us that you take such an interest in the wicked Countess Elfride. As for her lovely niece, she disappeared at the same time with yourself, and her aunt pretends that she is very lame."

"*Disappeared*, did you say?" cried Cristiano, unreasonably alarmed at the word.

"Come!" said the major, good-humoredly, "do you feel uneasy about your beauty, my dear Goefle?"

"Excuse me, I have no right to speak so of Countess Margâret. She is certainly beautiful; but, unfortunately for me, she is not *mine* in any sense of the word."

"I meant no harm," replied Osmund, "I merely saw, like everybody else, that she selected you for the partner of her first dance, and that you seemed to be chatting together in a very friendly way. If you are not in love with her you make a mistake, upon my honor, and if she don't feel some little weakness for you, perhaps she also makes a mistake, for we all think you a capital fellow."

"It would be altogether a mistake in me," replied Cristiano, "to aspire to a star too far above me."

"Bah! because you have no title? But your family has been ennobled, and your uncle, the lawyer, is a distinguished man in talent and character. He is quite as rich, moreover, as the beautiful Margaret. Love removes all obstacles, and if you have disagreeable relations, you can swear fidelity in secret. In our country, such betrothals are as sacred as any, and so, if you want to carry your point, we are all ready to help you."

"To help me in what?" said Cristiano, laughing.

"To an immediate interview with the countess, unknown to her aunt. Well, comrades, what say you? here are four of us all ready. For my part, I know where their rooms are, and we can go there without a moment's delay. If Mademoiselle Potin is frightened—pay her compliments, which she really deserves, as to that, for she is a charming person; and if a chambermaid screams, kiss her, and promise her ribbons for her hair. Then we demand a serious conversation with the Countess Margaret for Christian Goeffe, in the name of M. Goeffe, his uncle, from whom he brings an important communication! Ha!—that's it. They will introduce us—but of course without our pipes—into a little drawing-room, where we will sit down quietly apart, while Christian Goeffe addresses *la diva contessina* in a low voice, and offers her his heart; or, if he is too timid to do that, lets her divine what his sentiments really are, while he inquires about the dangers with which the peerless little lady is beset, and arranges with her to avert them. I am not laughing, gentlemen. It is quite evident that Madame d'Elveda wants to force the inclination of her ward, and that the cunning Olaus is trying to compromise her, so as to drive off all other suitors. Very well; the situation is magnificent for the man, who, in a crowded ball-room, took up the gauntlet for the victim of this odious and ridiculous plot. Come, Christian! come, gentlemen, are you ready? *Parbleu!* You shall have your turn! Another time, Christian, you shall be the one to assist us in love affairs as virtuous as your

own; we ought to be able to rely upon each other to that extent, we young folks. In Heaven's name, what would have become of us before now, if we were not all devoted friends and confidants? Forward! To the assault of the citadel. Follow me, if you love me!"

All started up, even Cristiano himself, for he could not help being carried away by the proposition, but he paused at the door of the room, and stopped the others.

"Thanks, gentlemen," he said, "and depend upon it that I will go through fire for you when necessary, but I have no right to introduce this sweet romance into my life. Nothing in the conduct of Countess Margaret authorized me to undertake her defence, which I did in a moment of thoughtless indignation, and I have no reason now to hope that she thanks me for my interference. She may be offended, on the contrary; and it belongs to M. Goeffe the lawyer, and to him alone, to protect her from her aunt, by acquainting her with her rights. The best thing for me to do, since my beautiful partner has left off dancing, and my terrible rival does not fight, is to go and have a good sleep, of which I am really very much in need, since I have been upon my feet for more than twenty-four hours."

Cristiano's sentiments were approved of, and he was loudly applauded for his gallantry. They tried to make him stop and drink with them, supposing this to be an irresistible temptation, but Cristiano was sober, as the inhabitants of warm countries usually are. The night was advancing, and he thought it more prudent to put an end to the comedy performed hitherto with so much success. He shook hands with his new friends, bade them adieu, promised to return to breakfast while inwardly resolving to do nothing of the kind, and without giving them time to inquire what part of the new chateau he was stopping in, returned lightly and mysteriously over the frozen lake.

It was on purpose that he left Loki, and the sleigh of the doctor of laws, at the new chateau; he was afraid that they would be heard, and cause him to be observed. He walked along the shore, until too far to be seen from the windows of the chateau, and then crossed to the door of

Stollborg, which he had left open, and which no one, Ulphilas least of all, had thought of coming to fasten.

He took these precautions, because, to the pale light of the moon, which was no longer visible, had succeeded the fleeting but brilliant splendor of a magnificent aurora borealis. It was magnificent, at all events, for this region, although it is quite probable that it would have been a very ordinary display at a higher degree of north latitude; and yet the illumination towards the polar regions must have been unusually vivid at this moment, for it lighted up the whole country, and every object around the frozen lake. The snow, under its varying reflections, was showing a fantastic and magnificent succession of red and blue colors, and Cristiano, before entering the bear-room, remained for several moments at the door of the court, unable, in spite of the cold and solitude, to tear himself from this wonderful spectacle.

V.

IT was eight o'clock next morning when M. Goefle awoke. Probably he had not rested as well as usual during the night, for he was habitually an early riser, and was quite scandalized to find himself abed at such an hour. It is true that he had reckoned upon little Nils to wake him, but Nils was still sound asleep, and, after several attempts to arouse him, M. Goefle concluded to let him lie as long as he chose. This was not ill-temper on the part of the doctor of laws, but simply complete despair of obtaining any service from his valet-de-chambre. Resigning himself to necessity, therefore, he lighted his own fire, and then proceeded, like a methodical man as he was, by the light of a candle, which somehow seemed to be asleep standing, to shave, and to comb and curl his wig as carefully, and as well too, as if all his conveniences had been at hand. Lastly, having completed his toilet, all except his coat, which was ready to slip on in case of need, he wound up his watch, looked out at the sky, saw that there was not yet the least trace of sunrise, put on his

dressings-gown, and, opening the two intermediate doors, prepared to put things in order in his saloon, the bear-room, intending to go to work there, quietly and comfortably, until breakfast-time.

But as he approached the stove, holding up his hand between his eyes and the flickering light of his candle, he started to see a human figure lying down between the stove and himself, the body sunk into the large arm-chair, the head lying over backwards upon the stuffed back, and the legs, thrust at a level with the body, into the large opening for hot air just above the grate of the stove.

"Hallo! What a sleeping beauty!" exclaimed the advocate; "he has really a superb face!" and he stopped to look at Cristiano, who was sleeping peacefully and profoundly. "It is some young gentleman or other who has run away to this old place from the noise and confusion of the new chateau, as I did. Well, I hoped I should be alone in this cursed hole, 'at any rate; but, if I can't, I must make up my mind to have company, I suppose. Fortunately this young man looks agreeable. The poor fellow must have been very careful, for he made not the least noise, and did not hunt at all for any better bed than that arm-chair, which must be breaking him in two across the loins!"

Then M. Goefle touched lightly the cheek of Cristiano, who motioned as if driving off a fly, but did not wake up.

"He is warm enough, at any rate," said the lawyer again. "That's a capital furred cloak — just like my travelling-cloak; why, it's exactly like it! Where is mine, by the way? Oh, I see; he found it on the chair, and just put it on. Faith, he was quite right. I should have made him perfectly welcome to it; indeed, I would have given him the other bed in my room, and Master Nils should have been obliging enough to sleep on the sofa. I am sorry the young man thought it necessary to be so particular! Really altogether too particular, I must say! A well-bred fellow, too, that's evident; and careful of his toilet, for he took his coat off when he went to sleep; that's a mark of a good, steady character. Let's see what can be our young friend's profession: a

black coat — quite like my own best dress-coat — so very like it that it is mine, for there's my own handkerchief perfumed with musk, and — ah! he has been using my invitation to the ball. And my white gloves! where are my white gloves? On the floor! — just where they ought to be, too, for they are entirely spoiled. Ah, ah, my fine fellow, you are not so ceremonious as I thought! indeed, I can venture to assert that you make yourself very much at home. You lose your baggage, or you don't take the trouble to unpack, and you help yourself to whatever you think proper out of mine. Young people play such tricks on one another, I know. I remember a certain ball at Christiania, where I danced all night in poor Stangstadius's clothes, and he had to lie abed until I came back — and all next day too, for I let them carry me off. But nonsense! we were young then. At my age it will not do to allow that sort of fun — to other people. Hallo, hallo, monsieur! Wake up! Give me my breeches and silk stockings! God pardon me, what a quantity of stitches the young animal has started in dancing! And he won't even condescend to open his eyes!"

As he made these observations in rapid succession, M. Goefle at last espied the clothes that Cristiano had laid off the evening before, and which, overcome by sleep at his return, he had left upon another chair. The threadbare trousers, the equally worn Venetian cloak, and the famous corded Tyrolian hat, launched M. Goefle upon a new sea of conjectures. Could this handsome young man, with his distinguished face and well-shaped hands, be some mere Bohemian, a bear-leader perhaps, a travelling pedler, a wandering singer? An Italian singer, possibly? No; his face was unmistakably a Dalecarlian one. A conjurer — perhaps a good deal too skilful in the line of his profession? No; for M. Goefle found his purse all safe in his trunk, and the sleeper's face was an extremely honest one. He slept the sleep of innocence, too, most assuredly.

What was to be supposed, and what was to be done? The lawyer scratched his head. Possibly this wretched

costume was a disguise which the young man had assumed to conceal himself while running about to play the Don Juan under the balcony of some pretty visitor at the new chateau. But finding none of his guesses satisfactory, M. Goefle finally set to work in earnest to awaken his visitor, shaking him repeatedly, and bawling into his ear, "Here, here, hallo! I say! Come, neighbor, wake up!" and such other exclamations as impatient people use for the benefit of obstinate sleepers.

Cristiano at last opened his eyes, looked fixedly at M. Goefle without seeing him, and with a truly Olympian calmness shut them again.

"Ah, there you go again," said the lawyer, "off to dream-land!"

"What is it? What's the matter? Does the aurora borealis last yet?" asked Cristiano, whose half sleep was evidently cradled in pleasant dreams.

"Where can you get an aurora borealis at this time of day?" asked M. Goefle; "it's just before sunrise."

"The sun? What is the use of talking about the sun in the middle of a ball?" asked Cristiano, in the coaxing voice of a sleeper who is begging to be let alone.

"Yes, that's it; the ball, my coat, the sun, my small-clothes, the aurora borealis," replied M. Goefle, "all very logical and well connected in your dreams, no doubt, my good friend, but I want you to give a better account of yourself, and I shall keep on shaking you until you can make out a more satisfactory case than that."

Good-natured Cristiano submitted to the shaking with incomparable meekness. The habit he had acquired of sleeping on the first board he came to, whether at sea in all sorts of weather or on the road in all sorts of vehicles, rendered even the vigorous rocking which the lawyer was bestowing upon him rather agreeable than otherwise; it was just sufficient to make him pleasantly conscious that he was in a state of repose. Gradually, however, the idea made its way into his mind, of ascertaining what place he was in. He opened his eyes, looked at the stove, turned about and gazed, as if to question the sombre walls of the room.

"Deuce take me!" he exclaimed, "if I know where I am. But, after all, what difference does it make? Here to-day, somewhere else to-morrow! Such is life!"

"Please to take the trouble, at least," said the lawyer, "to observe in whose company you are."

Well satisfied with this dignified command, M. Goefle waited for the surprise, or terror, or confusion, which were to appear in the face of the delinquent, but in vain. Cristiano rubbed his eyes, looked upon him with a smile, and observed in the most affable manner:

"A very good face, yours, sir! What do you want of me?"

"What do I want of you?" exclaimed M. Goefle, with some indignation; "I want my fur cloak, my cap, my waistcoat, my shirt, my slippers;—I want everything of mine that you have clothed and ornamented your lovely person with."

"Bah! bah! What makes you think so? You are dreaming, my good man!" said the adventurer, raising himself to a sitting posture, and looking with astonishment upon his borrowed wardrobe. Then, laughing, as he began confusedly to remember the night's transactions, he continued:

"Upon my word, Monsieur Goefle—it is that very respectable and eminent gentleman to whom I have the honor of speaking, is it not?"

"I have every reason to believe so, monsieur. Well, then?—"

"Well, then," replied Cristiano, rising promptly and removing the doctor's cap from his own head, with perfect courtesy, "I have to beg a thousand pardons—though at the same time I do not merit a single one. Please to consider, sir—I am a young man, and just at this moment quite destitute. A romantic notion led me to the ball last night, and I found no decent clothes within my reach except these, which Providence seemed to have sent on purpose. I am perfectly cleanly, and in perfect health; and moreover, if you should object to wear the clothes after me, I shall be able to-morrow to pay

you for them, whatever price you choose to value them at."

"A good joke that would be! Do you take me for a tailor?"

"By no means; but I should be extremely pained to be thought a thief. That is not my character at all."

"Faith, I see that you are an honest young fellow—but you are very thoughtless. Still, even if I were inclined to be angry, the thing is done, and can't be helped. I see very well that your health is good, for, by Jove, you have a magnificent color! And what hair! Ah, my fine fellow, I recognize the perfume of my hair-powder! But how the devil did you get into the ball-room without an invitation? for your style of travelling-dress does not indicate—"

"That I belong in good society, you were going to say? Oh, say so! I am not all susceptible on that point."

"But, after all, I don't know anything about it. The clothes don't make the man. You have a very aristocratic hand. Come—out with it! Who are you? If there's a romance, I'm fond of romantic stories; and if there's a secret—well, your face pleases me, and I promise to be as discreet—as discreet as a lawyer—more could not be said."

"I do not doubt your discretion, Monsieur Goeffe," said Cristiano, "and besides, I have no secrets that I need hesitate to reveal to a man of sense and character; but I give you notice that my story is rather long, and the stove is almost entirely cold. And to tell you the truth, although I had a very good supper last night, my appetite always wakes up as soon as I do; and I already feel some twinges."

"How do you suppose I feel, then?" said the lawyer; "for I am always in the habit of taking my tea in bed, as soon as I wake. That blockhead of an Ulphilas has abandoned me altogether. There are the very same dishes on the table that were there last night."

"Thanks to me, then, Monsieur Goeffe; for I recog-

nize the same ham and fish that I purloined out of the kitchen of your friend M. Ulph — what is his name?"

"Ulph; for Ulphilas. Yes, that is quite correct. Hereabouts, they abridge all names. They make monosyllables of them all, apparently for fear that otherwise, when they called anybody, half of his name should freeze in the air. If I am indebted to you for my supper, then, I must conclude that this said Ulph would have let me perish of hunger—he! he!—in this very room, about which there is already one story of the kind. Perhaps the rascal meant to leave me to the same fate, so as to make sure that the room should deserve its reputation."

"Is it the Baroness Hilda who starved to death here; Monsieur Goeffe?"

"Ah, you have heard of it, then? It is only a story, thank God! Let us think about our breakfast. I will call some one."

"No, Monsieur Goeffe. Ulph will certainly come immediately. Besides, if you want anything more, let me go and get it. There's nothing like choosing your own bill of fare; but this bear's ham, or boar's ham, this smoked tongue and roast game, which you hardly began on last night—don't they appeal to you any longer this morning?"

"Of course they do—of course; and there's more here now than we two can eat. Well, as the table is set, shall we take breakfast, hey?"

"That will suit me exactly; but allow me to step into a corner and make my toilette—or rather to unmake it, for I am still—"

"In my clothes? I see that well enough. Well, as you are in them, stay there. Only, take the pelisse off and put the coat on, or you will be smothered while you are eating."

Cristiano first refurnished the stove with fuel, and lighted it. Then, having washed his hands and face with much care and neatness in a corner of the room, he took his place, and began to carve the cold meats in a style that showed him to be a master of the art.

"It's curious," remarked M. Goeffe; "you have what they would call in France the manner of a perfect gentleman, and yet that old coat of yours there—"

"Indicates misfortune, and not poverty," answered the adventurer, quietly. "Eight days ago I was very decently equipped, and could have appeared at the ball without any embarrassment."

"Very possibly," said M. Goeffe, seating himself, and beginning to make good use of his handsome teeth; "just as it is quite possible that you are getting ready for one more of those romances that travelling adventurers excel in. It is all the same to me, if it is amusing."

"Come," said Cristiano, laughing, "in what language shall I recite my tale?"

"Faith, in Swedish, as that is your own language. You are a Swede, and a Dalecarlian too; I see that plainly enough, by your face."

"But I am not Swedish, though; Icelandic, rather."

"Rather? are you not sure?"

"Not the least in the world. Therefore, as Latin is the universal language, if you please—"

And Cristiano continued in elegant and correct Latin, speaking it with the greatest facility.

"Very well done, indeed!" said the advocate, who had listened kindly and attentively; "but your Italian pronunciation hinders me a little in following your Latin."

"Probably there would be the same difficulty in Greek and German," suggested Cristiano, changing first to the dead, and then to the living, language, with equal ease and correctness, and interspersing with his discourse quotations enough to prove that he was versed in both ancient and modern literature.

"Bravo!" cried the doctor; "you are a highly educated young fellow, I see. And French—do you know that also?"

"French and English, at your service," said Cristiano. "I was taught them all; and my own preference led me to the study of languages."

"Well, then, speak French," said M. Goeffe, who was

hardly less of a polyglot than Cristiano. "I love Italy, but I adore France. She is our ally, useful or not; and, above all, she is the antagonist of Russia, which I hold in execration."

"Great heavens! so do I. I am anti-Russian ever since I came into Sweden; and especially since last evening. But now, doctor, permit me to beg you not to take me for a pedant. The reason that I ventured to display my poor acquirements before a Professor of the Faculty of Lund is, that when you saw me carving that ham rather skilfully, you asked, in your own mind, whether I was not an ex-steward or butler from a good family, discharged in disgrace, and on the lookout for victims."

"There now! Did you really guess that that idea was passing through my mind? Well. I confess it; and I see now that if you have been employed in good families, it has by no means been in a lackey's place."

"Oh, *Mon Dieu*, monsieur!" answered Cristiano; "lackey or professor, it is very much the same thing with some people, except the difference of a grade more or less."

"Oh no! not in Sweden, my friend; the devil! no indeed: not here."

"I know it, monsieur. Your people are fond of profound studies, and the promotion of knowledge is nowhere more nobly encouraged; but in other countries it often happens—"

Here Cristiano was interrupted by the entrance of Ulphilas with breakfast. Seeing the table already set, he halted in stupid astonishment.

"You see, blockhead," cried M. Goefle, gayly, guessing the reason of his surprise, "my kobold has waited on me in your place; and it's well for me he did, for you have left me entirely alone this twelve hours."

Ulph, or Ulf—for there is sufficient authority for either form of the word—tried to excuse himself; but the consolation which he had sought in the bottle the evening before had entirely obscured his faculties, and he found it very hard to give any reasons for his neglect. As a general thing, Ulph became comfortable enough in

his mind by daybreak, and for the five hours or thereabouts following the late sunrise of winter, he was no more cowardly or awkward than other people. His excessive libations had, no doubt, an effect upon his dull brains at all times; but as he could nevertheless perform his domestic duties with the proper mechanical regularity, this was neither troublesome to others nor disquieting to himself. On the present occasion, he stammered, in the Dalecarlian dialect, some words of stupid surprise at seeing the dishes displayed upon the table, and an unknown individual seated with the doctor.

"Come," said the doctor, "wait upon this gentleman as you do upon myself. He is a friend of mine whom I have accommodated in my lodging."

"Yes, sir," said Ulph, "I have nothing to say against that; but the thing is that the horse—"

"Horse yourself!" exclaimed Cristiano, who had already picked up somewhere a few words of Dalecarlian, and who saw himself threatened by a terrible revelation.

"Yes, sir, horse myself," replied Ulph, with resignation. "But the sleigh—"

"What about the sleigh?" said the doctor; "have you cleaned it? Have you rubbed down my horse?"

The word *horse* again striking Cristiano's ear, he turned towards Ulph, and looked at him, aside, with such a terrific expression, that the poor stupefied fellow, quite losing his self-command, stammered in reply:

"Yes, yes, sir; horse, sleigh. It's all right."

"Very well, then, go on with the breakfast," said the doctor, reassured. "Give us the tobacco, Ulph, and let the tea-kettle alone. We will make the tea for ourselves."

As Ulph accordingly turned to the stove to set down the tea-kettle, Cristiano stepped after him, as if to superintend the operation, and turning towards him, said in his ear, in Dalecarlian, and with another terrifying glance:

"Horse, sleigh, new chateau—quick!"

Upon this Ulph took it into his head that in his drunkenness he must have received some orders which he had not executed; so he hurried off, put on his skates, and

went over to the new chateau to look for Loki through the noisy stables, overcrowded with grooms and horses.

Our doctor of laws did not eat so gluttonously as the doctor of sciences, Stangstadius. He took his time, and savored and passed judgment upon every dish, according to the great principles which govern the application of the culinary art to the lofty needs of the choicer class of stomachs. At the end of a further half hour of conversation, with experiments, on the subject, he and Cristiano, as they looked at each other, perceived each a rosy reflection upon the other's face.

"There it is at last!" said the doctor; "the sun is just coming above the horizon."

He looked at his watch.

"A quarter before ten," he observed. "Come, this Mora watch does very well. See, this is of home manufacture. Our Dalecarlians make everything. They make all their own tools, from the simplest to the most complicated. But don't put out the candle, it will be convenient while we are smoking; and besides, in the winter, I like to watch the doubtful, fantastic mingling of the sunlight and the artificial light struggling together in the room. Why, the clock's striking! You wound it up last evening, then?"

"Certainly. Did you not observe it?"

"I did not observe anything. I was sleeping while standing up, or else I was dreaming. Perhaps it is only a dream that I came in here and took supper. No matter. Can you make tea?"

"No; but coffee to perfection."

"Very well, make some. I will take charge of the tea."

"Are you fond of such an insipid, melancholy drink?"

"Yes,—diluted with a full third of brandy or old rum."

"Ah, that makes a difference! Doctor, I am surprised at finding here a table as well spread as if at Paris or London."

"Well, why not? Are we at the end of the world?"

It is only six hours' sail to Prussia, where they live just as they do in Paris."

"Yes; but off at the furthest end of this province, sixty or seventy leagues away inland, and in so poor a country—"

"So poor! Do you think a country must be poor because it is not well adapted to tillage? You forget that, amongst us, wealth lies under the ground, not above it; and that the mines of Dalecarlia are the very treasury of Sweden. You have noticed that this region, bordering on Norway, is thinly peopled, and you have concluded that it would not support a larger population. Let me tell you that if the government only knew how to develop its resources, and had the power to do so, our mineral wealth would afford the means of increasing a hundredfold our prosperity, and the number of our inhabitants. One day, things will go better with us, if we can only escape, on the one hand, from the claws of England, whose intrigues oppress us, and, on the other, from the pincers of Russia, who paralyzes us with her threats. In the meanwhile, my son, understand that if there are poor people amongst us, it is not the fault of this good land of God's, so much calumniated by the ignorance, indifference, or false notions of the men who inhabit it. People here complain of the severity of the winter and the hardness of the rocks. But there is a warm heart down underneath in the earth! Dig down anywhere, yes, I guarantee you, anywhere, and you will come upon some of the innumerable veins of valuable metals that ramify throughout beneath our feet. With those metals we can buy all the rarities, all the luxuries, all the productions of Europe, if we only have arms enough to lift the wealth to the surface of the ground. We complain of the earth, when it is men who are wanting. It is she who ought to complain of us, rather!"

"God forbid that I should speak ill of Sweden, my dear Monsieur Goeffe! I only say that there are great areas of land lying uncultivated and waste, and that what few inhabitants there are, are so frugal that the traveller can find nothing at all to eat except gruel and milk;—healthful food, no doubt, but not much calculated to stim-

ulate the imagination or to give energy to the character."

"There you completely deceive yourself again, my dear fellow! This region may be called the very head and heart of Sweden; an enthusiastic head, full of strange poetry, and sublime or graceful imaginations; an ardent and generous heart, where the main artery of patriotism is throbbing. Are you familiar with its history?"

"Yes indeed! Gustavus Vasa, Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII., all the Swedish heroes, have always found men in the heart of these mountains, though all the rest of the nation might be enslaved or corrupted. It is this glorious nook of the earth, this Switzerland of the north, that in every great crisis has supplied loyalty, energy, and salvation to the country."

"Very well said! Well then, admit that the national gruel and barren and icy rocks may bring forth and train up poets and heroes!"

As he said this, the doctor of laws drew his soft wadded dressing-gown around him, and poured into his boiling hot and well-sweetened cup of tea, a half-glass of the best quality of rum. Cristiano was enjoying the flavor of an exquisite cup of Mocha, and they both burst out laughing at their enthusiasm for the cold of the mountains and the gruel of hovels.

"Ah!" said M. Goeffe, becoming serious again, "the fact is, we are degenerate men. We must have our stimulants and tonics nowadays. That proves that the most accomplished or the most famous of us all is inferior to the lowest peasant of these savage mountains. But will not that animal of an Ulphilas bring us any tobacco? That fellow is a perfect brute!"

Cristiano laughed again, and M. Goeffe, perceiving the inconsistency of eulogizing sobriety and equality just at that moment, allowed himself to be appeased, especially when he espied the tobacco-jar at his elbow. Ulph had brought it, with his usual mechanical precision, and had omitted to say so, from his utter lack of spontaneity.

"Well, come," said M. Goeffe — extending himself in the arm-chair for more commodious digestion, and smoking

a magnificent Turkish pipe, whose bowl he rested upon a projection of the stove, while Cristiano, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting, sometimes astride his chair, smoked his short travelling-pipe with more speed and less tranquillity — “come, my problematic comrade, tell me this true history of yours, if you can.”

“Here it is, then,” said Cristiano. “My name is — or at least I go by the name of Cristiano del Lago!”

“Chrétien du Lac? Christian of the Lake? Why so romantic a name?”

“Ah, there you have me! *Chi lo sa?* Who knows? as they say in my country. It is altogether a romance, no doubt, without a word of truth in it. I will tell it to you as it was told to me.

“In some country — I don’t know what — by the side of a lake whose name I have never known, a lady — ugly or handsome, rich or poor, noble or plebeian — either in consequence of a legitimate connection or of an unfortunate mischance — gave birth to an infant whose existence, it seems, it was very necessary to conceal. By means of a cord and a basket — these details were told me with much precision — this lady, or her confidential companion, lowered the poor little new-born child into a boat, waiting below either by chance, or in pursuance of some arrangement made secretly. As to the lady, I have never met any one who could inform me what became of her; and where should I have made inquiries? As to the child, it was carried away secretly, I do not know whither, and maintained, I do not know how, until old enough to be weaned, when it was carried away again, I don’t know by whom, into another country —”

“I don’t know what!” said M. Goeffe, laughing. “Your statements are a little vague. I should be a good deal troubled with such evidence, to gain your cause.”

“My cause?”

“Yes; I am supposing that you are going to law to recover your name, your rights, your inheritance.”

“Oh, make yourself easy about that, Monsieur Goeffe,” replied Cristiano; “you will never have a cause to plead for me. I have none of the ordinary foolishness of adven-

turers of mysterious birth, who assume, at the very least, to be the sons of kings, and who spend their whole lives in hunting all over the world for their illustrious relatives, without remembering that they, most probably, would find it more inconvenient than agreeable to be recognized. For my part, if I happen to be of a noble family I don't know it, and I don't trouble myself about it. My adopted parents entertained this same indifference, or rather they inspired me with it."

"And who were your adopted parents?"

"I have never known, and I have no recollection who the persons were who received me from the window into the boat, who kept me at nurse, and who carried me into Italy. They may all have been of the same family — perhaps it was one and the same person — I can't tell anything at all about it. My only real adopted parents were Signor Goffredi, an antiquary and professor of ancient history at Perugia, and his excellent wife, Sophia Goffredi, whom I loved like a mother."

"But where and from whom did these good people receive you? They must have told you —"

"They never knew. They had a small fortune, and having no children, they had several times shown a desire to adopt some poor orphan. One evening, in carnival time, a man in a mask presented himself to them, and took from under his cloak the individual who now has the honor to address you, but who has not the least recollection in the world of the occurrence, and could give no explanation of it at the time; inasmuch as he then spoke a language that nobody could understand."

"But," interrupted the advocate, who was listening to this story with the same attention that he would have bestowed upon the progress of a cause in court, "what was the tenor of the words used by the masked person who presented you to Professor Goffredi and his wife?"

"Here they are, as they were repeated to me: 'I come from a distance—a great distance. I am poor, and have been obliged to spend part of the money given me with this child, in travelling. I thought myself bound to do this, for I had been ordered to carry him

far away, very far, from his and my own country. Here is the rest of the money. I have heard that you were looking for a child to adopt, and I know you will bring him up happy and well-educated. Will you receive this poor orphan?"

"The professor did receive it?"

"He accepted the child and refused the money. 'If I want a child to bring up,' he said, 'it is my duty to provide for him; not his for me!'"

"And had he not curiosity enough to inform himself—?"

"He could obtain no information except on one point—whether or no the child was likely to be reclaimed. He wanted to feel that it was wholly his; for he did not wish to become attached to the little creature, and then some day or other have it taken away. The unknown swore to him that no one would ever reclaim me; 'and,' he added, 'the proof is that I have brought him more than five hundred leagues, for the express purpose of causing every trace of him to be lost. The child,' he continued, 'would be in the utmost danger, even here, if his whereabouts should be discovered. Ask me no questions, therefore, I shall not answer them!' And he insisted upon leaving with them the small sum in question, which amounted to two or three hundred sequins."

"Italian money?"

"Foreign gold coins of various countries, as if the unknown had crossed the whole of Europe, and had taken pains to convert his money into all sorts of pieces, so as to disappoint search or supposition."

"The Goffredis reminded him that he was poor; he had said so, and his whole appearance showed it. It was only just, they thought, that he should be rewarded for taking such a long journey, and fulfilling so faithfully his orders about my removal. These offers he refused with obstinacy, and austere. He departed very abruptly, saying, to prevent further questions, that he would return next day. He did not return, however; nothing further was ever heard of him; and so I re-

mained intrusted, or, more properly, abandoned, thank God, to the care of M. and Madame Goffredi."

"But the history of the lake, the window and the boat—where the deuce did you get that?"

"Wait a moment. When I was five or six years old—I was apparently three or four when I made my entry into Perugia under the cloak of the man in the mask—I had a fall, and was for a time thought to be dead. It was not very serious, after all. But among the friends of my adopted family who came to inquire after me, there slipped in a little Jew, whether baptized or not I do not know, who lived in Perugia, and traded with visitors, in objects of art and antiquity. My parents disliked him because he was a Jew; for in Italy, as here, a strong prejudice prevails against that people. This Jew inquired about me anxiously, and even insisted on seeing me, so as to be satisfied as to my condition.

"A year afterwards, we spent the summer in the country, and on our return to the city, he came again to obtain further information about me, and to see with his own eyes whether I had grown, and was well. My parents were extremely surprised at this, and insisted on knowing why he took so much interest in me. They threatened to exclude him from the house unless he gave a satisfactory account of the matter; for they were already fond of me, and were afraid that this Jew might mean to carry me off. Upon this he confessed, or pretended, that he had chanced to receive at his house the man in the mask, on the day of his arrival in the city, and had extracted certain confidential disclosures from him about me. These disclosures, vague, improbable, and utterly useless, were the statements with which I began my story. Probably they are not entitled to any credit whatever. My adoptive mother paid very little attention to them, but thinking the adventure somewhat romantic, she gave me the surname of *del Lago*, which I have for a long time used as my real name."

"But the baptismal name, Christian, Christin, Christiern, Chrétien, Cristiano, who gave you that?"

"The man in the mask, without adding any other."

"Did this man speak Italian?"

"Very imperfectly. His difficulty in explaining himself added not a little to the mystery about me."

"But what sort of accent had he?"

"Professor Goffredi had occupied himself with the dead languages only. His wife, like himself a highly educated person, knew a good deal about living languages, but she found it impossible to decide to what nationality this man's accent belonged."

"And the little Jew, what did he think?"

"If he had any opinion about it, he never thought proper to tell it."

"Were your parents quite sure he was not himself the man in the mask?"

"Quite certain. The man in the mask was of middle size, while the Jew was not five feet high. Nor had their voices or accents anything of similarity. I see, Monsieur Goeffe, that, like my poor friends the Goffredis, you are asking yourself all sorts of questions about me; but what difference would it make, let me ask you, even if you could answer them?"

"Very true; what difference would it make?" answered M. Goeffe. "Perhaps you may not be worth the pains I have been taking this hour past to put you in the way of discovering your family. It is from a professional habit of mind: let us say no more about it; particularly as in all that you have told me there is not a single definite fact to serve as the basis for framing ingenious and learned deductions. Wait, however;—what was done with the money of the man in the mask?"

"My good parents, imagining that it may have been the hire of a kidnapper, or the reward of some other crime, and believing, therefore, that it could not bring me good fortune, hastened to deposit it in the box for the poor in the cathedral of Perugia."

"But you mentioned that you yourself spoke some language when you were brought there."

"Certainly; but I quickly forgot it, as there was no one for me to talk to in it. I only know that a German philologist, who was visiting us next year, tried to un-

ravel the mystery, at which time I had a good deal of trouble to remember a few words of this old language of mine. The linguist said it was a northern dialect, and somewhat like Icelandic; but my black hair seemed in a measure to invalidate that conclusion. The attempt to discover the facts was given up. My adoptive mother wished to make me forget all about any other country or family. You may easily suppose she had little difficulty in accomplishing her object."

"One question more," said M. Goeffe. "I cannot feel thoroughly interested in a story until I am well possessed of the beginning of it. These recollections, that faded of themselves so naturally, and which your friends tried, moreover, to help you lose — does there remain absolutely nothing of them?"

"There is something, but so vague that I cannot tell whether it is not merely a dream. It is a recollection of a strange, wild country, even grander in its features than this around me."

"A cold country?"

"That I do not know. Children seldom feel the cold, and I was never very sensitive to it."

"What else was there in your dream? Sunshine? snow?"

"I don't know. Tall trees, herds of cows, I think."

"Tall trees — that is not Iceland. And what do you remember of the journey to Italy?"

"Absolutely nothing. I believe my companion, or companions, were strangers to me when we set out."

"Well, go on with your story."

"That is, I will begin it, Monsieur Goeffe; for, so far, I have only been telling you the mysterious circumstances with which, as the poets say, my cradle was surrounded. I will begin with the first clearly-defined recollection in my mind. This is — pray do not be scandalized — an ass."

"An ass? A quadruped or a biped?"

"A real ass with four legs; a flesh-and-blood ass. He was the favorite animal of Sophia Goffredi for riding, and was called *Nino*, the diminutive of Giovanni. I was so fond of him, that I have called the one I now use to

carry my baggage by the name of Jean, in remembrance of him who was the joy of my early childhood."

"Ah, you have an ass? It must have been he who visited me last evening."

"And it was you who had him put in the stable?"

"Exactly. You seem to love asses."

"Fraternally. Indeed, I have been thinking for a quarter of an hour that mine has, perhaps, not had his breakfast. Ulph will be afraid of him. Perhaps he has driven him out of the chateau. The poor fellow may be wandering about in the ice and snow at this very moment, awakening the insensible echoes with his plaintive voice. I beg pardon, Monsieur Goeffe, but I must leave you for a moment and look after my ass."

"You are a queer fellow," said M. Goeffe. "Well, be quick, and give an eye to my horse at the same time. He's worth more than your ass — no offence to you. But are you going out to the stable in my dress-coat and silk stockings?"

"I shall be back in a moment."

"No, no, my boy, that won't do at all. Besides, you will catch cold. Take my furred boots and pelisse, and be quick!"

Cristiano thankfully obeyed, and found Jean in very good case, coughing less than on the day before, and eating contentedly in company with Loki, whom Ulph had brought back from the new chateau.

Ulph was looking at the ass in stupid wonderment. He was beginning to recover a little from his drunkenness, and to suspect that it was not a horse that he had so quietly groomed in the morning. Cristiano, who had learned on the previous evening, while hunting after his supper, what a superstitious poltroon he had to deal with, addressed him at once in Italian, accompanying his remarks with fierce looks and absurd and terrifying gestures. In this fantastic style, he ordered the poor fellow to respect the ass like a mythological divinity, and threatened him with the most fearful punishment in case of disobedience. Ulph, in a great fright, retired in silence, after saluting both the ass and his master, his brain full of

indistinct notions that he could not carry forward to any intelligible conclusion, but which the spirituous indulgences of the coming evening would be sure to develop into new alarms and imaginations more and more strange.

"Very well," continued Cristiano, returning and resuming his pipe, his story, and his position astride of a chair, in the bear-room; "Madame Goffredi's ass was my first friend. I believe no donkey in the world, not even my own, ever had such beautiful ears and such an agreeable gait. Perhaps, Monsieur Goeffe, the reason I think so is, that the first time that quiet pace and those two long ears attracted the attention of my poor little undeveloped mind, I was at the same moment instinctively impressed by one of the most beautiful sights in the universe. It was on the shore of a lake. Lakes, you see, play an important part in my life. But what a lake this was! The lake of Perugia — the ancient lake Thrasymentis! Were you never in Italy, Monsieur Goeffe?"

"No, very much to my regret. But as to lakes, we have some here in Sweden that would make your Italian ones look like wash-basins."

"I have nothing to say against your lakes. I have already seen a number of them. Very likely they are beautiful in summer, and even in winter, with their *mjeltjars* — is not that the name of those immense avalanches of earth that slide down to the water's edge with their green trees standing, their rocks and strange fractures? — I admit that they are very remarkable. The hoar-frost and ice that cover so many strange forms, and make a wreath of diamonds out of the smallest blade of grass; these inextricable net-works of brambles that might be taken for immense and elaborate pieces of work in cut-glass; the glorious red sunlight over it all; the jagged peaks above, glittering like shafts of sapphire against the purple of the morning — yes, I confess the grandeur of all this scenery. Even what I can see out of this window is a picture which dazzles me. Dazzles: that is the word; and that is really the only criticism I have to offer upon it. It excites me — carries me beyond myself. Eu-

thusiasm is good, no doubt; but is there nothing else in life? Has not man an immense need for repose, for contemplation, without any sense of effort; for that sort of soft, delicious revery that we call *far niente*? Well, it is down in the south, at such a place as lake Thrasymene, that one feels a glorious consciousness of mere vegetating. It was there that I grew up in perfect quiet, without any violent changes; a poor little weed, transplanted, from some unknown region, to those shores, blessed by the sunshine, shaded by the ancient faint-hued olive-trees, and, as it were, bathed always in warm fluid gold.

“We had—it is a sad *we*—a little country-house, or *villetta*, on a small stream called the Sanguineto, or Bloody Brook; in memory, it is said, of the blood that once ran down its bed from the field of the famous battle of Thrasymene. Here we passed all the pleasant summer weather in a delicious rural paradise. There were no more corpses in the stream; the waters of the Sanguineto were as clear as crystal. However, my dear adoptive father used to be absorbed by his quaint occupation of searching for bones, medals, and remains of armor, of which great quantities are still found among the grass and flowers along the shore of the lake. His wife, who adored him—and with good reason—always accompanied him; and I, by this time a great careless boy, whom also, in their loving kindness, they adored—I used to roll about on the warm sand, or ride dreaming along on my dear mother’s lap, rocked by Nino’s even pace.

“Gradually I came to perceive and understand the splendor of the days and nights in that lovely country. The lake is immense. Not that it covers so much space as even the smallest of yours, but grandeur is not the same as dimension. The curves of its outlines are so grand, and its atmosphere is so soft, that its luminous distances give an impression of infinity. I cannot remember, without emotion, certain sunrises and sunsets that I have seen there, over that broad mirror, filled with reflections of headlands crowded with tall, thick trees, and of distant islets, showing as white as alabaster among the rosy waves. And at night, what myriads of stars hung

quivering in the tranquil water! How lovely were the mists that climbed the silvery slopes, and how mysterious the harmonies that seemed to creep unobtrusively along the shores, with the slight ebb and flow of that great mass of waters that seemed afraid of disturbing the sleep of the flowers! With you, you must confess, Monsieur Goethe, that nature is violent, even in its winter's repose. In your mountains everything carries the marks of the perpetual floods of your spring and autumn. But there, all the terrestrial outlines are certain of preservation for a long time, and every plant of maturing in the place where it was born. In breathing such an air, we breathe in with it some similar kindliness of instinct; the eternal happiness of nature diffuses itself in the soul without overpowering or confounding it."

"You have a poetical vein in you, evidently," said M. Goethe: "but are not the people of that beautiful country dirty, idle, and voluntarily wretched?"

"Poverty is always half the fault of the government and half of the governed; the blame is never all on one side. I suppose that may be what prevents improvement. But in such a pleasant climate, the poverty produced by indolence finds an excuse in the sensuous pleasure of contemplative existence. In my youth I felt keenly this intoxicating charm of the south, and I appreciated it all the more because I felt also, from time to time, an excess of feverish energy, as if I had really been born five hundred leagues away, in those cold regions where mind exerts more authority over matter."

"Then you were not altogether indolent yourself?"

"I believe I was not indolent at all, for my parents desired me to become a learned man, and, out of affection for them, I made great efforts to acquire knowledge. But I felt much more inclined towards the natural sciences, arts, and philosophy, than to the difficult and minute researches of the learned M. Goffredi. I thought his line of study rather useless, and was quite unable to experience such a delirium of joy as he felt when we had succeeded in determining the purpose of some ancient landmark or deciphering some Etruscan inscription. In other matters

he left me perfectly free to follow my own preferences, and I lived with him in the pleasantest relations that it is possible to imagine. Indulge me in a few details about this period of my life, from infancy to youth — the time when the faculties of my soul were awakening within me.

“Perugia is a university city, a poetical place — one of the old Italian centres of beauty and learning. It is rich in antiquities and monuments of all periods; it has some fine libraries, an academy of fine arts, collections, and so forth. The city itself is beautiful and picturesque; it includes more than a hundred churches and fifty monasteries, all rich in pictures, manuscripts, etc. The Piazza del Duomo is a remarkable place, having on one side a rich Gothic cathedral, a fountain by Giovanni de Pisa, a chef-d’œuvre, and other monuments of different ages, and on the other a great palace in the Venetian style. This is a proud and strange relic of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, of a sombre red, finished with black ornaments in iron, and with its doors and windows pierced with that fantastic irregularity of design which has gone so entirely out of vogue since the introduction of the correct lines and pure taste introduced by the renaissance.

“I felt a passionate admiration for what I may call the dramatic physiognomy of this old palace, though M. Goffredi despised it as belonging to a period of barbarism. He admired only the antique, and such modern periods as are inspired by the antique. For my part, I plainly confess that all these masterpieces of exactly the same school, ancient and modern, sometimes tried very severely my power of admiring. This predetermined preference of the Italians for always going over that same old ground again, and their obstinate neglect of exactly the period when the national character was most freely expressing itself, between the absolutism of the emperors and that of the popes, had become so consecrated by public opinion, that you will pass there for a Vandal if you allow yourself to use any other than the recognized standards of excellence.*

* This is still true, in a great measure. During the last, and in the beginning of this century, the works of the middle ages were regarded with general contempt.

"I was natural and spontaneous in my character, and accordingly I was often reprovèd in consequence of my love for what was indiscriminately called 'The Gothic' --- that is, everything not pertaining to the ages of Pericles, Augustus, or Raphael. It was with some effort, indeed, that my adoptive father could bring himself to admire the last of these three. His only enthusiasm was for the ruins of Rome; and when he took me thither he was surprised and scandalized to hear me say that I saw nothing there to make me forget the royal imaginativeness and effective grouping of our own Piazza del Duomo, with its great red and black palace, its assemblage of varied splendors, and its narrow, crooked streets, that suddenly plunge under gloomy arcades, with a sort of air of tragic mystery.

"I was by this time fifteen or sixteen years old, and began to be able to explain my tastes and ideas. I managed to make my father understand that it was a matter of necessity for me to be absolutely independent in all that related to taste and feeling. I could not help admiring and enjoying all efforts of genius and of invention. I found it impossible to imprison my views within a system, an epoch, or a school. In a word, I must have liberty to adore the universe, God, and that divine spark which He has given to man, wherever visible in the works of nature or of art.

"'Thus,' I said to him, 'I love the beautiful sunshine and the gloomy night; our own austere Perugino and the impetuous Michael Angelo; the mighty substructures of the Romans, and the delicate pierced work of the Sarcophagi. I love our own quiet lake Thrasymene, and the furious cataract of Terni. I love your beloved Etruscans and all your sublime ancients, but I also love the Greco-arabic cathedrals; I love equally the monumental fountain of Trevi, and the little brook that runs between two rocks in the depths of some rural solitude. Everything that is new seems to me worthy of interest and of attention; everything is dear to me that at any time seizes hold of my heart or of my thoughts. Feeling these impulses to admire whatever is beautiful or sublime, and

even whatever is merely charming or agreeable, I have a great repugnance for a devotion confined to certain forms of the beautiful exclusively.

“‘But,’ I continued, ‘if you are convinced that in this I am in a wrong road, that the impulse which I feel—the desire for development in all directions—is dangerous, a symptom of an ill-regulated mental action, I will do my best to repress it, and throw myself entirely into whatever course of study you may mark out for me. I desire, above all things, to be what you wish me to be; but, my dear father, before you cut my wings, please to make yourself certain that there is nothing worth preserving in all this vain plumage.’

“M. Goffredi, though exclusively devoted to a very narrow range of studies, was the most generous character I ever met. He reflected much about the matter, and often consulted his wife, a woman of the divinest susceptibilities. Sophia Goffredi was what the Italians call a *letterata*; not a *femme de lettres*, as that term is generally understood in France, but a woman at once cultivated, charming, inspired, erudite, simple. She loved me so tenderly that she believed me a prodigy; and these two excellent friends decided with one accord that my wishes must be regarded, and that at any rate they would not extinguish my fire until they were certain whether it was a flame from heaven, or a mere blaze of straw.

“What gave them confidence in me was, that this disposition of mine to permit my mind to pursue its own impulses in every direction, did not originate in inconsistency of character. I was warm-hearted, and felt kindly disposed towards all my fellow-creatures, and yet I was not disposed to waste my life with all manner of company. My attachments were exclusively for the two persons who had adopted me, and whom I preferred to all others. Their society was my greatest, I may say my only pleasure, apart from the various studies that had captivated me.

‘It was decided, then, that my mind should be at my own disposal, particularly as, all things considered, it

was a pretty good mind ; and I was not obliged to confine myself rigorously to the university course. I was allowed to take my own way, and to give free career to the enormous facility with which I was gifted. Was this an error? I cannot think so. It is true that I might have been restricted to one specialty, which would have cased me up forever in some one corner of art or science, where I should never have known privation ; but how many intellectual enjoyments should I have lost ! And who can tell whether what are called practical ideas, and my own personal interests, if forced upon my attention in this way, might not have withered all the religion of my heart and my conscience? You will see shortly that Sophia Goffredi had no reason to regret having allowed me to be myself.

“My first conviction was that I was born for literature. Sophia trained me to write both in prose and verse, and while still a child, I composed several romances and comedies in rhyme, which our circle of friends were so kind, or so simple, as to admire. I might have become very conceited, for I was excessively spoiled by all our visitors ; but Sophia used often to tell me that the day when one is satisfied with one’s self is the last day of improvement ; and this simple warning saved me from the foolishness of self-admiration. And besides, I very soon saw that in order to produce anything worth while in literature, I must know a great many things, or else I should merely float in a sea of empty phrases. I read enormously ; but my studies in history and natural science caused me to entirely lose sight of myself ; and instead of gathering booty like a bee, to make honey and wax, I simply coursed to and fro through the vast field of human knowledge, merely for the pleasure of knowing and understanding.

“It was while thus engaged that I felt such a powerful impulse towards the natural sciences, and that my desire to devote my life to this pursuit became a vocation more definitely resolved upon in my mind than the former one. With this ardor for understanding, was joined a similar ardor for observing ; and I might say

that there awoke in me two distinct persons : one seeking to discover the secrets of creation for the love of science, that is, for the sake of humanity ; and the other seeking to enjoy the varied beauties of creation as a poet—that is, to some extent, for his own pleasure.

“ From that moment, I was possessed by the idea of making long voyages. While absorbed in studying the collections and museums of Perugia, I was dreaming of the antipodes ; and the sight of a little stone or dried flower would carry me in imagination to the summits of lofty mountains, or across vast oceans. I thirsted to see the great cities, the centres of enlightenment, the scientific men of my time, and great and precious scientific collections. Sophia Goffredi had taught me French, German, and a little Spanish. I felt, likewise, the necessity of learning the northern languages, so as not to be a stranger in any part of Europe. I learned English, Dutch, and particularly Swedish, with extreme rapidity. My pronunciation, however, was defective ; or rather, I had none. I did not try to master the characteristic music—so to speak—of languages which I could not hear spoken ; but relied upon the correctness of my ear, and my facility in catching accents, for quickly mastering the spoken use of any language when necessary. The event has shown that these expectations were quite justified ; I only need fifteen days to speak, without any foreign accent, a language which I have studied only in books.

“ While I was thus learning languages, I was also studying drawing and a little painting ; in order to be able to fix permanently my travelling recollections, by sketches of sites, remarkable plants, costumes, monuments,—in short, all that would have to be retained in the memory alone, if the hand had not the power to delineate the mental conception. Besides, I studied good writers, for the sake of enabling myself to narrate clearly and rapidly ; for I had often been displeased at the obscure and confused style of books of travels. And so well did I use my time, Monsieur Goefle, that at eighteen, I was well prepared, in virtue of my knowledge, activity,

power of labor, and faculty of observation, to become at least a useful, if not an actually scientific man. That was the happiest time of my life, the purest and sweetest. Ah, if it could have lasted a few years longer, I should have been a different man !

“M. Goffredi was buried in his antiquarian researches, and did not directly superintend my education. He, however, from time to time, reviewed my studies with me, and observed me with care, and when he was satisfied that I was not losing my time and labor, he became quite confident in my judgment. He had at first been tempted to dissuade me from trying too many things at once ; but when he was satisfied that all my various acquisitions found their places in good order in my mind, he began to dream with me and for me everything that I dreamed myself. He had himself travelled before his marriage, and he was even now projecting another archæological tour, to reach certain points not yet explored. He was thinking the more seriously of this plan, since receiving a small inheritance that had recently fallen to him, and which enabled him to resign his professorship at the university. He had been for ten years employed on a work which he could not complete without visiting the coast of Africa and some of the Greek Islands. I should mention that his way of working was painful and slow, for his style lacked clearness, and there was also perhaps some want of clearness of thought in his way of presenting his reasonings, however ingenious in themselves. He was a genius without talent.

“He was pleased with the manner in which I wrote up some pages of his work for him, and resolved to take me with him, and have me write it all out after we came home. I was almost wild with delight when he communicated this design to me ; but my joy was quickly changed to sadness at the idea of leaving alone at home my adoptive mother, that excellent woman whose whole life was devoted to us, and I asked to remain with her.

“She was grateful to me for this, but suggested, by

way of satisfying all three of us, the plan of going herself—a proposition which was received with enthusiasm. Our preparations for departure were now made as joyfully as if for a feast. Ah, everything smiled upon us! *La Sofia*—you know that with us the *le* or *la* is a superlative of admiration, and not a term of contempt—was accustomed to long walks. In the country she used to go everywhere with us. She was active, courageous, and enthusiastic, and was never the least hindrance to us. If we were ever weary or discouraged, she raised our spirits, and put us into good humor, by her gayety and energy. She was still young and strong, and the angelic tenderness and goodness of her smile made you forget all about the plainness of her features. Her husband loved her devotedly; and as for her, nobody could have convinced her that Silvio Goffredi was not a demigod, despite his lameness, his prematurely rounded shoulders, and his fabulous absence of mind. But how pure and generous was the soul hidden by that frail body, and those timid and irresolute manners! His disinterestedness as to money was admirable, and a proof of it was this very work, for which he was sacrificing his employment and his habits. He was aware that such books cost more than they bring, especially in Italy; and he calculated upon no gain from this one; yet it was the glory, the purpose, the dream of his whole life.

“My poor mother was the most impatient to start of any of us, and she felt an absolute confidence in our good fortune. It was decided that we should begin by visiting some of the islands of the Archipelago.

“I must ask leave to pass rapidly over what follows; the recollection is most painful. In crossing part of the Apennines on foot, my poor father received a slight wound in the leg, from striking it against a rock. Notwithstanding our urgency, he neglected the wound, and insisted on walking during the following days. The weather was terribly hot. When we reached the coast of the Adriatic, where we were to embark, he found himself obliged to rest for some days, and we succeeded in inducing him to allow a surgeon to visit him. But what

was our terror to find that mortification had commenced ! We were at a mere village, far away from all competent aid. Our country surgeon, who was little more than a mere barber, spoke unconcernedly of amputating the leg. Would it have saved him, or hastened his death ? In so horrible a dilemma, my mother and I knew not what to resolve. My father, with heroic courage, decided to have the leg taken off, and spoke of travelling about the world with a wooden leg. We dared not subject him to the knife of a butcher. I determined to hasten to Venice — it was only fifty leagues distant. I obtained a horse, set out, broke him down by night, abandoned him, bought another, and continued my journey. I reached the city exhausted, but alive. I applied to one of the first surgeons of Venice, and induced him to return with me by agreeing to pay him a sum equal to the whole of Sophia's property. We took a boat and returned by sea, with a speed that filled me with hope and joy. Ah, monsieur ! if I should live a thousand years, the memory of that terrible day would, I believe, be as bitter as it is now. I found Silvio Goffredi dead, and Sophia Goffredi insane."

"Poor fellow !" said M. Goefle, as the great tears fell from Cristiano's eyes.

"Well, well," said the latter, hastily wiping them away, "it will not do to be surprised by emotions of that kind. It shows that one has too forcibly driven them out of his mind, and they revenge themselves for it once for all, when they can seize their rights.

"The skilful physician whom I had brought with me could neither cure my mother, nor give me any hope that she would ever be cured. He was only able, by studying the character of her insanity, to instruct me how to deal with its more violent attacks. It would be requisite to comply with all her desires, no matter how unreasonable, and, in other matters, to assume over her the sort of influence, and even authority, which a father exerts over his child.

"I carried her back to Perugia, along with the body of our poor friend, which we had embalmed, in order to deposit it in the mausoleum which his wife was imagining

for him on the shore of lake Thrasyment. What I suffered at thus bringing back my father dead, and my mother insane, to the place from which we had so joyously departed not three weeks before; it is impossible for me to express. When we went, Sophia was laughing and singing all the way. On our return, also, she laughed and sang; but how mournful was the music, and how heart-breaking the laughter! I had to lead her along, to reason with her, to amuse and persuade her as one does a child — this woman, who had been so intelligent and strong; who but yesterday I relied upon as my guide and support; for, Monsieur Goeffe, I was hardly nineteen years old.

“When the remains of Silvio Goffredi had been interred, his widow became more calm. Indeed, this calmness came upon her so suddenly, and was so extreme, that it seemed an appropriate last act of the sad drama of her destiny. I soon perceived that she had become, so to speak, a total stranger to herself; she became wholly absorbed in one idea: that of the monument to be erected to her beloved Silvio. From that day she would neither think nor talk about anything else. It was impossible for me to pursue any employments of my own, for she hardly slept at all, and allowed me only a few hours’ sleep, I will not say every day, but every week. It was out of the question to put her into the hands of any one but myself; under the care of any one else she became irritated, and fell into frightful paroxysms; while, with me, she never had a single attack of fury or despair. She talked to me endlessly, not about her husband, for she seemed no longer to retain any clear individual recollection of him; he had, as it were, become a wholly imaginary being, whom she had never seen; but she discussed the epitaphs, the emblematic designs, the carvings, etc., with which she proposed to embellish her husband’s monument.

“I think I must have drawn two or three thousand different designs for her. Each new one always pleased her for an hour or two, but at the end of that time she always found it unworthy of the memory of the ‘Magnus,’ as she now always called the dear deceased. No emblematic design could embody the abstract and con-

fused ideas that floated through her mind. She was constantly falling into profound meditations, when, taking out of my hands the pencil she herself had placed in them with a pretence of making some slight alteration, she would make me design some entirely new subject of a quite opposite character. As you will easily imagine, most of these designs were quite impracticable, and even meaningless. If I varied from her suggestions, she became so uneasy and agitated that I found it best to comply strictly with them. Thus I accumulated portfolio after portfolio full of designs, fantastic enough to have crazed any one who should have undertaken to interpret them.

“When some hours had been spent in this way, she used to take me out to see the pieces in marble that she had ordered of all the statuaries in the country. She had the court and garden full of them, and as soon as they were done she was dissatisfied with them.

“Another fancy of hers, which I felt bound to gratify at whatever cost, was in respect of the material to be employed for this imaginary monument. She obtained specimens of all the varieties of marbles and of all known metals; and more models, both in sculpture and in casting, were executed than the house could contain. They were even piled upon the beds; and travellers used to take our house for a museum, and to come to it and ask the meaning of all the strange subjects represented there. Poor Sophia found pleasure in receiving these visitors, and in explaining her ideas to them; and so they departed, some pained and saddened, others laughing and shrugging their shoulders,—the brutes! Their sneers affected me like so many crimes.

“Meanwhile our property began to be exhausted. M. Goffredi had left to his wife the whole of his little fortune, which I was to have inherited after her. A family council of the kinsmen assembled under these circumstances, as was alleged, both in order to protect my interests, and to provide for carrying out my father’s intentions in this respect. One member, a lawyer, was of opinion that the control of the property should be

taken away from poor Sophia : that all artists, founders, mechanics and tradesmen should be formally notified not to fill orders from her, and that she herself should be confined in a lunatic asylum, since the proposed measure, being contrary to her wishes, would certainly throw her into a paroxysm of fury, in which she would be dangerous to others."

"The lawyer was right," said M. Goeffe. "It was a painful step, but a necessary one."

"I really beg pardon, Monsieur Goeffe, but I judged otherwise. As I was the sole heir of Goiffredi, I had a perfect right to permit my guardian to expend my property."

"No, you had not that right. You were a minor, and the law protects those who cannot protect themselves."

"That is just what I was told: but I was so sufficiently able to protect myself, that I threatened to throw the lawyer out of the window if he did not withdraw his infamous proposition. To put my mother into a lunatic asylum! I should have had to be shut up with her, for she could not bear to be without me a moment: she would quickly have died under the distress of being attended by hirelings. To deprive her of this sole occupation that could quiet her: that exerted an influence upon her little less than magical! To prevent her from expressing and soothing her sorrows by these works — senseless and ruinous in themselves, I readily admit, but which neither harmed nor wronged any one! And what mattered our house full of tombstones so that far and prosperous lawyer? No one obliged him to volunteer his regret for money thrown away, or to mock at the aberrations of the poor widow's mind, unsettled by her grief. I persisted, the family blamed me, and the lawyer declared I was out of my wits myself: but my mother was kept comfortable."

"Ah, ah, my boy!" said M. Goeffe, smiling. "that's the way you treat lawyers, is it? Come, give me your hand!" he added, looking upon Cristiano with eyes wet with tenderness and sympathy.

Cristiano pressed the hands of the worthy Goeffe, and raised them to his lips, in the Italian manner.

"I accept your kind feelings to me," he said, "but I cannot accept your praises for my conduct. It was perfectly natural; to have been influenced by selfish motives in such a situation would have been infamous. Have I not told you how much I had been loved, petted, indulged, by these two parents—for such I felt them, even by blood as well as by heart. Ah! I had been happy with them, very happy, Monsieur Goeffe—so much so, that no matter what disasters shall come upon me, I shall never have the right to complain of Providence. I had certainly not deserved so much happiness before I was born. I surely was bound to try and deserve it after I had lived a little while!"

"And what became of poor Sophia?" asked M. Goeffe, after a few moments' meditation.

"Alas! I promised to tell you my story as gayly as possible, and I have only shown you its melancholy side! I ask your pardon; I have saddened you. All I need say is, that the poor lady is no longer living."

"Of course, since you are here. It is easy to see that you would never have left her. But did she fall into actual want before her death? I am anxious to know the whole story."

"No, thank God; she was spared that misfortune. I do not know what might have happened if all her means had been expended, and I had been obliged to leave her for the sake of earning our living. But that consideration was not the one that troubled me. Notwithstanding her calmness, I could see that she was rapidly failing. At the end of about two years, one evening when we were sitting by the shore of the lake, she took my hand and said, with a strange inflection in her voice:

"'Cristiano, I think I have fever. Feel my pulse, and tell me what you think.'

"This was the first time, since her misfortunes, that she had referred to her health. I perceived that she was really in a violent fever. I took her into the house and sent for a physician.

“‘She is very ill, it is true,’ he said to me, ‘but possibly it may be a favorable crisis!’

“In fact, she had never had any fever at any time since her disorder had seized her.

“But I felt no hope. She fell into a state of profound lethargy, upon which no treatment produced the least effect, and the progress of her decline was so rapid as to be plainly visible. A few moments before she died she seemed to recover strength, and to awaken as if from a long dream. She asked me to lift her in my arms, and feebly whispered in my ear :

“‘I bless you, Cristiano ; you have saved me. I think I have been insane, and that I have been a trouble to you. Silvio has this moment been blaming me for it. I just saw him, there ; he told me to rise up and follow him. Help me to escape out of the tomb where I have shut myself up so foolishly ! Come ! The ship is setting sail ! Let us go !’

“And with one supreme effort to arise, she fell back dead into my arms.

“I know nothing of what happened for some days. I felt as if I had no further concern with life, since I had no longer any one but myself to care for.

“I had the remains of my dear parents deposited in one tomb, and placed over it the simplest and whitest of the monuments that had been accumulated in our home, cutting upon it, with my own hands, the beloved names, with no other epitaph. You may well suppose that I felt a horror of formulas and emblems. When I returned to our home, I was notified that it belonged not to me, but the creditors. This I knew very well, and, indeed, I was so entirely ready to depart from it, that I had mechanically packed up my own property, while the women were wrapping the body in the winding-sheet. I left the business of settlement in the hands of the family, for I had been orderly enough, in the midst of my carelessness, to know that though nothing should be left for me, no debts would be left unpaid.

“I was about leaving my home, when the little Jew of whom I spoke came in. I supposed he came to get a

cheap bargain of some of M. Goffredi's precious antiques, which were to be sold at auction; but if he had any such purpose, he had delicacy enough not to mention it to me, and, as I sought to avoid him, he followed me into the garden where I was gathering a few flowers — the only material souvenirs which I proposed to carry away with me. He put into my hands a well-filled purse, and would have retreated without any explanation.

"I had so little thought of any relations other than those whom I had just lost, ~~that~~ I concluded this was an alms which the Jew had been employed to bring me; I flung the purse away upon the ground, in order to make him return and pick it up. He did so, and said:

" 'This is yours — it really is. It is money which I owed Goffredi, and I wish to repay it to you.'

"I refused, for this might be just the amount necessary to enable the estate to meet all the claims against it. Then the Jew said:

" 'The money comes from your real parents. They deposited it with me, and I engaged to deliver it to you whenever you should need it.'

" 'I need none of it,' I replied, 'I have enough to carry me to Rome, where M. Goffredi's friends will find me some employment. Make my parents easy about me. I presume they are not rich, since they have been unable to bring me up under their own eyes. Thank them for having remembered me, and say to them that, at my age, and with the education I have received, it is my duty to be of assistance to them, if they should need it. Whether they reveal themselves to me or not, I will do this with pleasure. They intrusted me to such good hands, and I have been so happy in consequence, that I owe them the liveliest gratitude.'

"Those were my real sentiments, Monsieur Goeffe. I was not dissembling at all, for they are my sentiments still. I have never felt any inclination to accuse or question the motives of those who gave me life, and I do not understand the feelings of illegitimate children who complain of not having been born into such or such a condition of society as they would have chosen — as if every living

being had not been from all eternity destined to live, and as if it were not God who calls us, or sends us, into this world, under such conditions as it pleases Him to establish.

“ ‘Your parents are no longer living!’ replied the little Jew; ‘pray for them, and accept this gift from a friend!’ ”

“ This being a third account, different from the two preceding, I felt a secret distrust.

“ ‘Perhaps it is you yourself,’ I said, ‘who are so good as to offer me this friendly assistance?’ ”

“ ‘No,’ he replied, ‘I am simply the agent, nothing more.’ ”

“ ‘Very well: say to those who employed you that I thank them, but decline to accept anything, either from friends who disclose themselves or who hide themselves. Are you authorized by my family to give me any information?’ ”

“ ‘No, none,’ he said, ‘but I may probably do so hereafter. Where do you intend to stop at Rome?’ ”

“ ‘I have no idea.’ ”

“ ‘Very good; I shall learn, however, for I am under obligations not to lose sight of you. Farewell, and remember that if you fall into trouble this money is yours, and that you have only to give me notice, and I will account to you for it!’ ”

“ He seemed to say this with sincerity, but it was possible that he was one of those bold speculators who furnish means to the necessitous with the intention of amply reimbursing themselves afterwards. So I thanked him rather coldly, and departed with my pockets almost empty.

“ I felt but very little anxiety about the future. It would be impossible for me now to think of travelling, and instead, I should have to find employment and work for my support. Although, for a considerable time, I had been unable to pursue my studies, my memory was so good that I had not forgotten what I already knew. My attainments were sufficiently varied, and their elements still clear enough in my mind, to render me quite competent to become the private tutor of some young lad, and I was especially desirous of finding such a position, so that I

might continue my own pursuits, by encroaching on my sleep.

“My father’s position in the province where we lived had been exceedingly honorable ; but, strangely enough, my conduct in regard to Madame Goffredi was considered romantic, and quite unworthy a person of trustworthy character. I had allowed myself to be ruined, — so much the worse for me. As I was generally reputed to be a witless spendthrift, and a sort of lunatic, it would have been useless for me to seek employment. So I could not think of settling in Perugia. At Rome, one of my father’s friends found me a position as tutor in the family of a Neapolitan prince, who had two idle and stupid sons, besides a daughter, hump-backed, and of a coquettish and amorous disposition. At the end of two months I had to ask my dismissal, so as to escape from the demonstrations of this heroine, of whom I did not choose to become the hero.

“At Naples, I met another of my father’s friends, a learned abbé, who obtained a place for me in a family less rich, but a great deal more disagreeable than that of the prince, and where my pupils were even less intelligent. Their mother, who was neither young nor handsome, quickly became unfriendly to me, because I was unwilling to deceive myself as to her charms. I made no pretensions to a savage degree of virtue, and did not think of claiming that I could fall in love only with a goddess, — I could have been quite contented with an ordinary mortal. But, even although this lady had been passably attractive, nothing would have induced me to be the lover of a woman who had authority over me, and who paid me my salary. So I went back to my learned abbé, and told him my troubles. He laughed, and said :

“ ‘ It’s your own fault. You are a handsome fellow, and that makes you difficult.’ ”

“I entreated him to get me a position with a widower or orphans, and, after some efforts, he informed me that he had found just what I wanted. The young Duke of Villareggia, who had lost his father and mother, and who had neither sisters nor aunts, was being educated by his

uncle the cardinal. He already had a tutor, but wanted a professor of languages and literature. I was received into this post, and found it not only agreeable, but lucrative. The cardinal was a man of cultivation and intellect; and the nephew, now thirteen years of age, had a good mind and an amiable disposition. I became much attached to him, and brought him on rapidly, while at the same time pursuing my own studies with much ardor; for I had a lodging to myself, and all my evenings at my own disposal. The cardinal was so well satisfied with me, that he paid me quite liberally, so that I might dispense with seeking other pupils, and devote myself exclusively to the duke.

“For about a year, my conduct was studious and regular. I had suffered so much sorrow, and felt so deeply my social isolation, that my views of life were, perhaps, rather too serious. I might have become a mere pedant, had not the cardinal taken it into his head to urge me, in the most elegant and graceful manner, to mingle in the follies and corruptions of the day. He succeeded in making me a man of society, for which I am not sure that I am bound to be grateful. Gradually I came to waste a great deal of time on my toilet, and on my pleasures and intrigues. The cardinal’s palace was the rendezvous of all the wits of the day, and of the principal celebrities of the city. I was not expected to cultivate the moral character of my pupil, but merely to supply him with superficial accomplishments and pleasing social qualities. As for myself, all that was required of me was to make myself agreeable to everybody. This was not difficult, among people so amiable and frivolous. I was considered charming; indeed more so than was best for an orphan without position, fortune, or prospects.

“In the course of time I became quite dissipated, and was decidedly on the road to ruin. Indeed, I was encouraged, and, as it were, pushed downward in this career by all sorts of influences, and had nothing to restrain me but the memory of my parents, and the fear of becoming unworthy of the name which they had bequeathed me. I ought to have told you that my adoptive father had

directed me, in his will, to assume the name of Cristiano Goffredi; and that I was thus known at Naples. With serious and learned people, this honorable name was an excellent recommendation, but it was thoroughly plebeian, and I too easily forgot that I needed, therefore, to exercise great prudence and reserve in my intercourse with the young nobles with whom I was in the habit of associating at the cardinal's house. I suffered myself to be carried away by their engaging manners, and was much liked, because I had neither the awkward manners nor the austere principles of a professional pedagogue. I was invited everywhere, and was a favorite member of all the gay assemblies of the most fashionable youth of the city.

"The cardinal congratulated me upon my ability to reconcile suppers, balls, and late hours with the accuracy and lucidity which I unfailingly brought to the instruction of his nephew. Yet I myself perceived very plainly, and suffered from the consciousness, that I was no longer cultivating my own intellect with sufficient assiduity. I felt that I had stopped short in my progress, that I was insensibly becoming a mere showy and shallow talker, that I was turning into a parlor comedian and poet; and furthermore, was laying up nothing from my salary with a view to securing my future independence and respectability. My linen was too fine and my brains were too empty; in short, I had abandoned myself to dissipation and vacuity of mind, and from between these prison-walls there was great danger that I would never escape.

"As a usual thing, I banished these reflections from my mind, but they sometimes made me very anxious. And then, the pleasures that were intoxicating me so did not give me any real enjoyment, after all. At the home of my parents, and in their society, I had experienced nobler enjoyments, more genuine amusements. I retraced, in memory, the delightful walks we had taken together, always with a serious purpose, which afforded us a pure satisfaction, while, in the feverish activity of my present existence, I was conscious of being in reality

as languid and exhausted as if I had been living in utter idleness. I began to dream again of the noble enjoyments of the adventurous traveller; and when I looked at my purse, which was always empty, I asked myself whether I could not have made a better use of the money that I earned by hard work; whether it would not have been more to my advantage to devote it to satisfying my genuine physical tastes and intellectual necessities, instead of throwing it away in diversions that wearied my body and exhausted my mind. And then suddenly I felt like a stranger, even in my home. I thought how foreign to my nature all my surroundings were in this country, where I was not rooted by any vital family ties; its frivolous society, its servile political condition, its enervating climate and indolent population. I felt, at the same time, more energetic and more thoughtful than this people. In spite of my twenty-three years and my poverty, I begun to consider whether I would not marry, so that I might have a home of my own, a motive of reform, a serious object in life. But when I confided these perplexities and moral anxieties to the cardinal, he laughed at me for a foolish fellow.

“‘You drank too much, or worked too much, last night,’ he said, ‘and your head is full of vapors. Go and drive them away with Cintia or Fiammetta, but don’t marry them, of all things.’

“I loved the cardinal, for he was a good-hearted and agreeable man; yet, though he was paternal, and unaffectedly kind to me, I saw plainly that he was rather amiable than loving. What he wanted was to have agreeable people about him, and he valued me because of my social qualities; but he was not the man to retain me in his service very long if I should become melancholy, and hence tiresome.

“I accordingly tried to drive away my thoughts, and to rest contented, like all around me, with the enjoyments of each day, without caring for the morrow. But I could not do it. My dissatisfaction increased, and I could not hide it. I became disgusted with easy successes in love; sensual infatuations, to which women of all ranks seemed

to abandon themselves without resistance. Poor, and a plebeian, these intrigues had at first flattered my vanity ; but when I saw that my barber, who was a good-looking fellow, was as successful as myself, I contracted a great horror of the marchioness. I became eager to quit Naples, and begged the cardinal to make me a librarian or steward, no matter what, at some one of his villas in Calabria or Sicily ; I thirsted for repose and for solitude. But he still laughed at my plans for retirement. In fact he had no faith in them ; he thought me no more fit for a steward than for a monk. In this he was right, no doubt ; yet it was a misfortune that he retained me, as you will see.

“A second nephew of the cardinal returned from his travels, and became an inmate of the house. This was Marco Melfi, a young man as unintelligent, foolish, indolent, and vain, as his young cousin, Tito Villareggia, was sympathetic and kind-hearted. He made himself disagreeable to everybody ; and very soon had several duels on his hands. He was an excellent swordsman, and wounded or killed all his adversaries without receiving a single scratch ; and his insolence became, in consequence, perfectly insupportable. I avoided collisions with him as long as possible, but being one day urged beyond endurance by his brutal provocations, I gave him the lie in form, and offered him satisfaction with the sword. This he refused, saying that I was not a gentleman, and darting at me, he attempted to strike me. I, however, flung him down, and left him unhurt, except that he was almost choked with fury. The quarrel made a good deal of noise ; and the cardinal, while he acknowledged to me between ourselves that I was in the right, yet begged me to hasten and conceal myself on one of his estates, until Melfi should depart on his travels again.

“The idea of hiding was revolting to me.

“‘But, my poor fellow,’ said the cardinal, ‘do you not know, that as things are, my nephew is obliged to have you assassinated?’

“This expression seemed to me rather amusing, and I replied that I would *oblige* Marco to fight me.

“‘But you can’t kill my nephew,’ said he, patting me gayly on the head. ‘Even supposing you were skilful enough, you would not make such a return as that for the fatherly kindness that I have shown you?’”

“This observation silenced me. I returned to my lodging and made ready to depart. I ought to have been more cautious about it, but I could not bring myself to seem to be running away secretly. All at once, as I stepped out of my room to look for a small box that was in the vestibule of the house, where I lived by myself, two villains fell upon me and undertook to overpower and tie me. In the struggle that ensued, I pushed them down stairs; but, just as I was about to escape, the door was shut in my face, and I heard a harsh voice proceeding from the vestibule exclaim:

“‘Courage! tie him! I want to beat him to death on the spot!’”

“My rage, at hearing this, gave me superhuman strength, and I fought my two assailants with so much fury, that they were both overpowered in a few seconds. Then, without further notice of them, I sprang at Marco, who, seeing that his attempt had failed, tried to flee. I, however, forced him against the door, and snatched away his sword, which he would have drawn to defend himself.

“‘Scoundrel!’ I said, ‘I will not kill you, but you shall fight me, and at once.’”

“Marcus was slender, and inferior to me in strength. I made him go up stairs before me, and pushed him into my room, when I double-locked the door, took my sword, and giving him his, said:

“‘There, defend yourself; you see that you may sometimes be obliged to fight with a plebeian!’”

“‘Goffredi,’ he replied, lowering the point of his weapon, ‘I do not wish to fight you, and I will not; I am too certain of killing you; and I should be very sorry to do that, for you are a good fellow. You might have assassinated me, and you did not do it. Let us be friends.’”

“Not mistrusting him, and not being of a revengeful

disposition. I held out my hand to take that which he had offered me, when he aimed a swift and skillful left-handed stab at my throat with a silken. I evaded the thrust, which only wounded my shoulder. Upon this I no longer restrained my anger, but instantly and furiously smacked the villain, who was forced to stand on his defence. Our weapons were equal, and he certainly had greatly the advantage over me in skill and practice. But, however it may have been, I laid him dead at my feet. He fell sword in hand, without speaking a word, and with an infernal smile on his face. At this very moment there was a violent knocking and pounding at my door, and he may have thought that he should quickly be avenged. For my part, I did not know whether the two assassins, recovered from their stupor, had returned to the attack, or whether they had warned the police to come and arrest me; but, exhausted as I was with emotion and fatigue, I felt that I should be lost in either case. So I mustered up what strength I had left, and jumped out of the window. It was not more than about twenty feet high; I alighted upon the courtyard pavement without much injury, and holding my coat tight around me, to prevent the blood from my shoulder from indicating my track, I fled as far as my legs could carry me.

It was well for me that I succeeded in gaining the country, for as this affair had passed without witnesses, it would necessarily have been a very bad one for me. It made no difference that I was in the right, that my behavior had been loyal and generous, and that my adversary was a cowardly scoundrel. He belonged to one of the best families in the kingdom, and the holy inquisition would have made but a single mouthful of a poor wretch like me.

I found refuge for the night in a fisherman's cabin, but I had not a single farthing about me with which to pay for the dangerous hospitality. Moreover, my torn and bloody clothes would not allow me to show myself by day; and my wound — whether it was severe or not I did not know — pained me extremely. I felt my strength

failing, and I well knew that the whole police of the kingdom was already on foot, and hunting after me. Lying on a miserable mat, under a little shed, I wept bitter tears, not over my unfortunate destiny — I should have been incapable of such weakness — but because of the sudden and irreparable rupture of my relations with the good cardinal and with my amiable pupil. I felt that I loved them deeply, and I cursed the fate which had caused me to defile with blood the mansion where I had been received with so much confidence and kindness.

“However, it was escape, and not lamentation, that I needed to concern myself about. It occurred to me, of course, to find the little Jew who had asserted that he knew the mysterious friends or relations who were watching over me, or who had employed him to do so. I forgot to say that this Jew had established himself in Naples, where I had met him more than once. But it seemed to me too dangerous to return into the city, and I could not have written to him without running the risk of being discovered. Hence I gave up the idea.

“It is needless for me to relate in full my adventures in effecting my escape from the kingdom of Naples. I had managed to exchange my tattered clothes for some other rags not quite so suspicious in appearance, but I found it very hard to obtain food. The whole community knew that pursuit was being made after the ‘vile assassin’ of a nobleman, and poor vagrants were looked upon with distrust. If it had not been for the women, who are always more courageous and more humane than we men, I should have died of hunger and fever. My wound often forced me to halt in the most solitary and deserted spot I could find, and in some such hiding-place, lacking every kind of assistance, it seemed more than likely, on several occasions, that I should leave my bones, from sheer lack of strength to rise up and go forward. And yet, M. Goeffle, can you believe that, even in this desperate situation, I experienced, at moments, a sense of delirious joy, as if, in spite of everything, I were enjoying a foretaste of my reconquered liberty. The open air, the motion, the freedom from conventional restraints, the sight of the

open plains, whose distant horizons I might now expect to reach and pass—all, even to the hardness of my bed of rock, recalled to my mind the projects and aspirations of the time when I had really lived.

“At last I gained the frontiers of the Papal States in safety; and as I had not followed the road to Rome, but had made a detour through the mountains, I had every reason to hope that the spies on the lookout for me had been baffled. I stopped in a village, therefore, to dispose of my merchandise; for such was my horror of begging, and so angry did it make me to be refused, that, to avoid the temptation of beating the people who sent me off with rude brutality, I had taken it into my head—as I should have told you before—to become a merchant!”

“A merchant?” interrupted M. Goefle, “a merchant of what? You had not a penny to start with!”

“Very true, but I had a pen-knife in my pocket when I fled, and this took the place of capital. Although I had never worked in sculpture, I was familiar enough with the principles of design, and one day, chancing to notice on the road a remarkably white and unusually soft layer of rock, it occurred to me to provide myself with a dozen or so fragments from it. These I broke off on the spot; and afterwards, while I was resting, carved into little figures of madonnas and cherubs, about as large as a finger. This stone, or rather chalk, which was scattered all about the country in this direction, was very light; I could carry as many as fifty of my little statuettes without inconvenience, and I used to sell them to the farmers and peasants for five or six *baiocchi* each. This was certainly all they were worth, and it was enough to furnish me with bread.

“For several days I had succeeded remarkably well in my new avocation, and I hoped, on seeing that it was market-day in this village, that I would be able to dispose in safety of my whole supply of merchandise. I found, however, but little custom, in consequence of the competition of a Piedmontese with a great tray of plaster figures; and so it occurred to me to sit down and execute my carving in sight of the crowd, who quickly gathered round me.

This plan was extremely successful. The quickness of my work, and very likely the simplicity of its style, made it very popular, and the admiration and delight of these good folks, especially of the women and children, made my Piedmontese competitor extremely jealous and angry. He addressed me several times in a violent manner, without making me lose patience. I saw plainly that he meant to force a quarrel on me in order to drive me away, but I only made fun of him, telling him to go to work as I did, and make some of his statuettes, so as to show his talents to the company, a suggestion which was received with great applause; for in Italy even the lowest classes are fond of everything connected with art. So my rival found himself laughed at as a mere mechanic, while I was loudly declared to be a real artist.

“The malignant rascal, upon this, contrived a very mean trick to revenge himself. He dropped two or three of the cheapest of his images on purpose, and then made a terrible outcry, so as to attract the attention of some of the police, who were moving about here and there in the crowd. When he had succeeded in bringing them to the spot, he charged that I had been stirring up the people against him, that they had been shoving him about, and had caused great damage to his frail wares. He was a respectable person, he said, who paid for his license, and was well-known in the neighborhood, while I was a mere vagrant, and very likely something still worse, who could say? perhaps that vile assassin of the cardinal? This was the shape that the story had already assumed, and it was in this character that I was held up to public animadversion, and to the scrutiny of the police. The people, however, took my part; and many witnesses testified to my innocence as well as their own, proving that no one had pushed, or even touched the tray of the figure-merchant. Those who were immediately about me stepped quietly in the way of the officers, and made room for me to pass.

“But although I found good friends among them, there were also plenty of blackguards or cowards, who pointed me out without saying a word, as I rushed precipitately into a crowded by-street. The officers pursued me; I

had a good start, but I knew nothing of the locality; and instead of gaining the open country, very soon found myself in another square, where a number of people had gathered attentively about a theatre of marionettes. Scarcely had I had time to join this group, when the officers came up and began looking around with penetrating eyes. I made myself as small as possible, and was pretending to feel a great interest in Punchinello, so as not to excite the curiosity of my neighbors, who were jostling me on every side, when suddenly a luminous idea, suggested by my imminent danger, flashed into my excited brain. While the officers were trying to force an entrance into the compact and motionless crowd, I crept gradually forward until I could touch the canvas of the booth. Then stooping slowly down, I suddenly glided in under it as a fox runs into a hole, and found myself squatting almost between the legs of the operator—that is, of the person who was moving the marionettes and speaking for them.

“Do you know what a theatre of marionettes is, M. Goeffe?”

“Certainly! I saw Christian Waldo’s only a little while ago, at Stockholm.”

“Saw it?—From the outside, you mean?”

“That’s all; but I have a very good idea of the inside, though that one seemed to me to be rather complicated.”

“It is a theatre for two operators, or, in other words, for four hands, which means, of course, four actors on the stage, and that is a sufficiently large company of *burattini*.”

“What are *burattini*?”

“They are the classical, primitive marionettes; the best. The *burattino* is not the same as the stiff, wooden *fantoccio* which, hung to the ceiling by strings, moves about without touching the ground, or else with a noise that is ridiculous and unnatural. The jointed marionette, which is much more scientific and complete, contains some really ingenious mechanism, that enables it to make very natural gestures and to assume graceful attitudes. With further improvements it could undoubtedly be con-

structed to imitate nature perfectly ; but, on investigating the subject, I have asked myself of what use this would be, and what advantage art would derive from a theatre of automata? The larger they were made, the more like human beings, the more disagreeable, and even frightful, the spectacle of such artificial actors would become. Does it not appear to you so?"

"Certainly, it does — but the digression interests me less than the continuation of your narrative."

"Pardon me, pardon me, Monsieur Goeffe, the digression is unavoidable. I am just coming to a singular part of my adventurous career, and I must positively prove to you the superiority of the *burattino*. I want to convince you that the instrument of the comic artist, in this elementary representation, is neither a machine, nor a puppet, nor a doll ; it is a living being."

"Ah! Indeed? A living being?" repeated M. Goeffe, looking with astonishment at his companion, and asking himself whether he was not liable to occasional fits of insanity.

"Yes, a living being! I insist upon it," replied Cristiano, with enthusiasm ; "and all the more because it has no body. The *burattino* has neither wheels, nor strings, nor pulleys. It is a head, and nothing more ; a head with expression and intelligence, in which — but wait a moment!"

Cristiano stepped under the staircase, and opening a box, produced a little wooden figure, dressed in rags, which he threw down, picked up, tossed in the air, and caught again in his hand.

"There," he resumed, "look at that! A rag — a mere chip, the figure scarcely indicated. Now see, I put my hand inside of this little leather bag, my forefinger in the head, which is hollow, my thumb and middle finger into these sleeves, to manage the two little wooden hands. These hands, you see, are short, formless, and not exactly either open or shut. This is intentional ; it is to conceal their immovability. Now let me stand at such a distance from you as suits the size of the little thing. There ; stay where you are, and look!"

While he was speaking, Cristiano had mounted the staircase at two bounds, crouched down so as to hide his body behind the balustrade, raised his hand above it, and moved the marionette with extreme address and grace.

"You see, now," he cried, as gayly as ever, and yet with real earnestness, "you see how perfect the illusion is, even without either theatre or scenery. The face, which is sketched, as it were, in a broad style, and painted in colors of a somewhat dull tone, begins, as it moves, to look as if it were alive. If I were to show you one of the best German marionettes, all varnished and shining, covered with spangles, and moving by wheel-work, you could not help remembering that it is only a doll—a mere piece of machinery; while my *burattino* here, lithe and obedient to every motion of my fingers, comes and goes, salutes, turns its head, folds its arms, raises them towards heaven, expresses all manner of emotions, strikes a blow, beats upon the wall with joy or despair. And don't you see that you fancy you perceive all these emotions expressed in the face too? What is it that causes such a wonderful effect? How is it that a head so roughly cut, so ugly when closely examined, should suddenly assume, in the play of the light, such a lifelike expression, that you quite forget its real size. Yes, I insist upon it, that when you see the *burattino* in the hands of a real artist, upon a theatre where the scenery, the stage, the surroundings are in proper proportion to the actors, you completely forget that you yourself are not upon the same scale; you forget even that the voice that speaks for them is not their own. The association apparently so impossible, of a head no larger than my fist, with a voice as strong as mine, is admitted readily in the state of mysterious intoxication into which I manage gradually to bring you, and the whole miracle is accomplished. Do you see what causes it? The fact that the *burattino* is not an automaton, but a thing obedient to my caprice, my inspiration, my impulses; because all its motions are the results of ideas which spring up in my mind, of words which I furnish; in short, because it is myself; therefore, a living being and not a doll!"

Having thus argued his case with a great deal of animation, Cristiano came down stairs, laid the marionette on the table, took off his coat, apologizing to M. Goefle on the ground of being too warm, and placed himself astride upon his chair again, so as to resume the thread of his story.

During this odd interruption, M. Goefle's attitude had been about as amusing as Cristiano's.

"Wait a moment," he observed, taking up the *burattino*. "All that you have said is very true, and well argued. And now I understand the extraordinary pleasure which I took in the representations of Christian Waldo. But what you do not explain, and what I nevertheless perceive very plainly to be the fact, is, that this good little gentleman that I have in my hand, I would like very well to make him move and talk myself—Come, my little friend," he proceeded, inserting his fingers into the head and sleeves of the *burattino*, "come; take a look at me. That's right: yes; you are very good-looking, and I am happy to make so close an acquaintance with you. And now, I declare I remember you! You are Stentarello, that very joyous, satirical and graceful Stentarello who made me laugh so much a fortnight ago at Stockholm! And you, young man," continued M. Goefle, turning to his guest—"although I have never seen your face before, yet I recognize you perfectly by your voice, your sprightliness, your gayety, and your sensibility as well—you are Christian Waldo, the famous operator of the Neapolitan *burattini*!"

"Very much at your service," answered Christian Waldo, bowing to the doctor of laws with much grace; "and if you would like to know how Cristiano del Lago, Cristiano Goffredi, and Christian Waldo came to be one and the same person, attend to the rest of my adventures."

"I am listening, and with a great deal of curiosity, too. But I want to know when you received this new name of Christian Waldo?"

"Oh, that one is really new. It only dates back to last autumn, and I should find it difficult to tell why I

adopted it. The fact is, I believe it came to me in a dream, and that it is a reminiscence of the name of some locality which made an impression upon my mind during my infancy."

"That is singular! Well, no matter. You left off inside the theatre of marionettes, in the square of—"

"Of Celano," said Christian; "again on the borders of a beautiful lake. I assure you, Monsieur Goefle, that my destiny is linked in with lakes; there certainly is some mystery under the association, which perhaps some day I shall penetrate.

"You have not forgotten that the police were at my heels, and that had it not been for the booth of marionettes, I should probably have been taken and hung. This booth, however, was very small, and could hardly contain more than one man. When I asked you if you knew how these marionette theatres are constructed—an excusable inquiry, since this characteristic Italian amusement is not common in your country, and perhaps has never been brought here except by myself—it was with the intention of explaining my position between the feet of the operator, who, busily occupied in making Punchinello fight with an officer, with his hands and eyes both raised as high as possible, and his mind intensely concentrated upon the work of improvising his burlesque drama, had no time to notice or to understand what was taking place in the vicinity of his knees. There remained, therefore, only a single minute before the denouement of the piece and my own fate together.

"I felt that it would not do to trust my safety to mere chance. Picking up from the ground two *burattini*, which, by a curious coincidence with my own circumstances, represented a judge and a hangman, and rising up as well as I could by the side of the operator, I placed the marionettes upon the stage, and at the risk of breaking through the cloth awning of the box, introduced an unexpected scene into the piece, quite impromptu. This scene had an immense success; and my associate, without being the least in the world disconcerted, received it quite as a matter of course, and

although extremely crowded for room, sustained his part of the dialogue with extraordinary gayety and presence of mind."

"Wonderful, fantastic Italy!" exclaimed M. Goeffe; "nowhere else are men's faculties so keen and so ready!"

"My companion," continued Christian, "was a good deal more penetrating than you have imagined. He had recognized me; had comprehended my situation, and had resolved to rescue me."

"And did he do so?"

"Most effectually: while I was delivering the closing speech to the public in his stead, he, without saying a word, put an old cap of his own on my head, flung a tattered red cloak about my shoulders, and rubbed some ochre on my face. Then, as soon as the curtain had fallen, he said in my ear:

"Goffredi, take the theatre on your back and follow me."

"And, in fact, we passed through the square in this way, and left the village without being molested. We travelled all night, and before daylight had reached the Roman campagna."

"But who was this devoted friend?"

"It was a young man of good family, one Guido Massarelli, who, like myself, had run away from the kingdom of Naples. His difficulty was a less serious one than mine; he had fled only from his creditors. But he was not so good a fellow as I, Monsieur Goeffe, notwithstanding; I give you my word for it! Still, he was an amiable young man, well educated, accomplished, and with extremely attractive manners. I had been quite intimate with him in Naples, where he had wasted his property, and had made many friends. He was the son of a wealthy merchant, was naturally well endowed, and had received an excellent education; but, like myself, he had been too early launched in a society much too expensive for him; so that he speedily found himself without resources. I had myself supported him for some time; but as he could not be contented to live simply,

and had not the force of character to work for a living, he had ended by becoming a swindler."

"Did you know this?"

"I did, but I could not find it in my heart to reproach him at the moment when he had saved my life. Like myself, he was in a state of complete destitution. He had absconded with a few crowns, and with these had purchased from a mountebank a theatre of marionettes, which he used not so much to make his living as to hide his face.

"‘This business of mine,’ he said, ‘is a stroke of genius upon my part. Here I have been for two months rambling about the kingdom of Naples without being recognized. Perhaps you will ask why I do not go further away. The reason is, that I have creditors in all parts of Italy; I shall find them everywhere, unless I go as far as France. Besides, I had left some little love affairs at Naples that were still pulling at my heart, and I could not make up my mind to leave the neighborhood. This light cloth watch-tower keeps me invisible in the midst of the crowd. While all eyes are fixed upon my *burattini*, no one thinks of inquiring who the man is that moves them. I go from one neighborhood to another walking erect inside of my shell, and when I am once out of it, nobody knows that I am the same person who has been diverting the public.’

"‘It certainly is a good idea,’ I said; ‘but what do you propose to do now?’

"‘Whatever you choose,’ he answered; ‘I am so glad to meet you again, and to be of service to you, that I will go with you wherever you like. I am more attached to you than I can express. You have always treated me with indulgence. You are not rich, but you have done much more for me in proportion than many of my friends who are. You have defended me when I have been accused; and even while blaming me for my follies, have always tried to persuade me that I was perfectly able to reform. I do not know that you are right, but I am sure of this: that for the sake of pleasing you, I will make one supreme effort, only pro-

vided it be out of Italy; for anywhere in Italy I am lost and dishonored. If I am to attempt a better life, I must do it in a foreign country, and under an assumed name.'

"Guido spoke with deep earnestness, and even shed tears. I knew him to be kind-hearted, and I believed him sincere. Perhaps he was so at that moment. To tell you the truth, I have always felt very indulgent towards those who are generous as well as prodigal, and this was the case with Guido, to my own knowledge. I beg you, however, Monsieur Goeffe, not to suppose that I confound together liberality and selfish extravagance, although I, too, have been an offender in this respect. At any rate, I allowed myself to be moved and persuaded by my old comrade and new friend; so you will please to imagine us within the territories of the pope, breakfasting frugally together under the shade of a clump of pine-trees, and arranging a joint plan of operations.

"We were equally destitute; but my situation, though in a legal point of view more serious than his, was still by no means desperate. It would have been quite possible for me to have effected my escape without so much risk, fatigue and suffering. I should only have had to take refuge outside the city of Naples, with any one of a number of honorable persons, who had assured me of their friendship, and who would certainly have believed my word when I described to them how I had been in some sort forced to kill my cowardly enemy. He was hated, and I was beloved. I should have been well received, concealed, properly cared for, and enabled to leave the country in safety under influential protection. The police, and even the inquisition, can sometimes be induced to close their eyes when sufficient influence is exerted. However, I could not bring myself to adopt this plan; I felt an insurmountable repugnance to it, on account of my poverty, and the necessity I should have been under of accepting aid at the very outset. While I was with the cardinal, my salary had been too liberal to justify me in leaving him empty handed. He himself would certainly never have suspected how destitute I

was. I should have been ashamed to confess, not that I was without money, for the young men in the circle I frequented were constantly in a similar condition, but that I had no prospect of receiving any until I had earned it in some new employment; and still further, the fact that it would be necessary for me to live much more sensibly and prudently than I had done in the past. Upon this latter point I was quite ready to enter into an engagement with myself; but, under the circumstances, my pride would not allow me to make promises to others.

“When I explained my situation to Guido Massarelli, he was greatly astonished at my scruples, and seemed even to feel a sort of contempt for them. But the more he urged me to apply to my friends in Rome for assistance, the more repugnant the idea became to me. Perhaps I was unreasonable about it; but at any rate, while I felt no shame at all at being reduced to the necessity of eating lupins with my companion in misfortune, it is certain that I would have died of hunger rather than go with him to beg a dinner of my old acquaintances. He had so long abused the efficacy of applications for aid, promises, useless repentances and artfully contrived narratives, that I should have been very much afraid of being supposed engaged in a similar course.

“‘We have been foolish,’ I said to him, ‘and we ought to be men enough to take the consequences. For my part, I have decided to proceed into France by the way of Genoa, or else into Germany by Venice. I shall go on foot, and live as I can. As soon as I can reach some large town outside of Italy, for here I am constantly in danger of falling into the hands of the Neapolitan police from the least imprudence, I will look out for some regular employment. I will write to the cardinal, and justify myself; from my friends I will request letters of recommendation, and I am confident that, after more or less of poverty and delay, I shall find some respectable position. If you like to come with me, come, and I will help you to the best of my ability in doing as I do—that is, in earning a respectable living by honest work.’

“Guido seemed so perfectly willing, and so well con-

vinced, that I no longer hesitated to allow myself the enjoyment of an intimacy with him. In fact, I have often observed that a thorough scoundrel is often one of the most agreeable of men, and that the most companionable people are frequently those most destitute of dignity of character. But we have an absurd sort of conceit that makes us believe that we can exert an influence over such unfortunates; and when they deceive us, the fault is as much ours as theirs.

"I make these preliminary reflections so as to avoid interrupting the account of what followed.

"Our first business was to escape from Italy: in other words, to travel some hundreds of leagues without a farthing in our pockets. I promised that I would find the means, asking only for a few days' rest to enable my wound to heal, for it was very painful and feverish.

"'In the meanwhile,' I said, 'go and provide for yourself. I will take a loaf of bread and establish myself under a rock, near a spring. That ought to be sufficient for a man in a fever. We will appoint some place of meeting, and I will join you as soon as I can travel.'

"He refused to depart, and devoted himself to taking care of me; and so much zeal and ingenuity did he display in relieving my pain and supplying my wants, that I could not help feeling sincerely grateful. In three days I was upon my feet again, and by this time I had made my reflections.

"In brief, this was their result. I had come to the conclusion that we could not do better than to continue our marionette exhibition, which only required to be made more profitable and less vulgar. We needed to escape from the everlasting drama of Punchinello, to choose plots equally simple, but less threadbare; and, taking these for the groundwork, to improvise together amusing little comedies. Guido had enough, and to spare, of wit for this sort of work, and instead of applying himself to it with reluctance and dislike, he saw at once that, with an agreeable companion, it could be made very amusing. It is a general rule, by the way, that we cannot entertain other people when we are bored ourselves. So he read-

ily assisted me to build a portable theatre in two sections, one of which served each of us as a shelter, in which we walked, safe from sun, rain, and police-officers; and which, when joined together by a few hooks, formed a stage large enough for the manœuvring of our two pairs of hands. I transformed his wretched *burattini* into intelligent and well-costumed figures, and added to them a dozen characters invented by myself. Then, in the open air, in a solitary wilderness, we made the first trial of our new theatre.

“The sale of my little devotional images carved out of stone, which Guido sold about the country to much better advantage than I could have done, defrayed the humble expenses of this establishment. In about a week we had advanced so far as to give a dozen representations in the suburbs of Rome, which had the greatest success, and netted the fabulous profit of three Roman crowns! This was enough to enable us to set out on our journey across the deserted regions that separate the Eternal City from the other provinces of Italy. Guido, who was delighted at our success, wanted to stay longer at Rome. It is very true that we might have risked going into the more fashionable quarters of the city, so as to have attracted the attention of a better class of society to our little comedies. But that was precisely what I was afraid of, and what we both needed to be afraid of, considering our reasons for remaining concealed. I therefore overruled my companion, and we took the road to Florence, exhibiting, as we went, in the villages and small towns, to pay our current expenses.

“We went by the way of Perugia, and it was not without a reason that I preferred this to the Sienna route. I wished to see again my own beautiful and beloved city, my sweet lake of Thrasymene, and, most of all, the little villa where I had been so happy. We reached Bassignano at nightfall. Never had I seen the sun setting in such luminous splendor in waters so calm and transparent! I left Guido to establish himself in a small inn, while I went along the shore of the lake towards the little villa which had formerly been occupied by the Goffredis.

"In order to avoid being recognized in the neighborhood, I put on a mask and a harlequin hat, which I had bought at Rome to use in case of danger. A few parti-colored rags transformed me into a professional mountebank—a very appropriate character for an exhibitor of marionettes employed in distributing handbills. The village children, fancying that I was going to play tricks for their amusement, followed me with cries of joy, but I drove them away with my wooden sword, and was soon alone upon the shore.

"The night had come on, but the air was bright, and in the limpid crystal of the lake, where the lines of the horizon were indistinguishable in the twilight, I seemed to trace and follow the immensity of the starry heavens, and to float, like a disembodied spirit, upon some fantastic similitude of infinity. Ah, Monsieur Goeffe! how strange is life sometimes! And what a strange appearance did I myself present, in that grotesque costume, seeking about, like a lost soul, under the shade of the willows, which had grown in my absence, for the solitary tomb of my poor parents! For a moment I believed that it had been removed, that they had robbed me of it—for it was mine—my only possession! With my very last means I had purchased the little nook of consecrated earth where I had laid their remains.

"At last, however, I discovered the humble tomb, and, sitting down by it, and taking off my harlequin's mask, I wept freely. I remained there for a good part of the night plunged in reflection, for I desired, before leaving this spot probably for the last time, to review my life, to repent of my errors, and to make good resolutions for the future. Divine grace is no illusion, Monsieur Goeffe. I do not know to what extent you are a Lutheran, and for my part I do not pretend to be very much of a Catholic. In these days, in fact, nobody believes in very much of anything, unless it be in the necessity and duty of toleration. But I believe, in a vague sort of way, in a soul of the world—no matter by what name you call it—a great soul all love and goodness, which receives our tears and our aspirations. The philosophers are just now as-

serting that it is a platitude to imagine that the Being of beings will condescend to concern himself with such worms as the human race. But I say that there is nothing either great or small, in the sight of Him who is All ; and that, in an ocean of Love, there will always be room to receive with kindness one poor little human tear.

“ Accordingly I instituted an examination of my conscience over that tomb ; and, in the rain of soft light which fell upon me from the quiet stars, I fancied that the two beings whom I had loved as a father and mother, must surely be sending at least one ray to find me out and bless me. I felt that between me and them there was neither crime, shame, cowardice, nor impiety. I had never forgotten them for a single day ; and, in the very midst of my dissipations, whenever the demon of youth and curiosity had urged me towards the deeper abysses of this vicious and unbelieving world, I had always drawn back and protected myself by invoking the memories of Silvio and Sophia.

“ To have avoided evil, however, was not enough ; it was my duty to do well. Well-doing is a task which varies with the position and capabilities of each one of us. My own duty was, to continue the labors of Silvio Goffredi, and to accumulate the means of writing out and publishing the results of his researches. For this it would have been necessary, in the first place, to acquire quite a fortune, in order to complete his travels. I had at first thought of doing this, but my inexperience, the pleasures of the senses, and bad examples, had led me on, from day to day, in a life like that of a mere adventurer. It was this reckless course which had resulted in my ruin. If I had remained contented with the appropriate position of a modest professor, I should not have been obliged to kill Marco Melfi. He would never have thought of insulting me ; indeed, he would not have met me in the cardinal’s saloons. He would not have searched me out in my study among my books—he would not even have known that I existed. I had tried to play the gentleman, and had been obliged to become a bully.

“ ‘ How my poor mother would have wept ! ’ I thought

to myself, 'to have seen me transformed into a strolling mountebank, bruising, on the stones of the pavement, the feet that she used to warm in her own hands before putting me in my cradle! And would not my father have disapproved of the false sense of honor which had made me a murderer and an outcast?'

"I remembered the quick sensibilities and scrupulous pride of the noble Silvio, and yet he could not manage a sword, and had refused to allow me a fencing-master. 'A man's honor,' he used to say, 'must be very frail, if he could not make himself respected without having a sword dangling at his side.'

"By the memory of these dear and holy friends I took an oath to amend my faults: and, after gazing for a long time at the heavens, where I imagined them reunited in some happy star, I returned at once to the village, without caring any longer to go in search of the *villeggiatura*. Why should I have gone there to indulge in barren regrets? It was not to enable me to live in idleness that Gottfredi had bequeathed it to me. He must needs have blessed me, even from his tomb, for alienating the property, and expending his whole fortune in solacing the last days of his widow. But when that was done, I ought to have labored all the harder, instead of acting as if one small act of devotion to my family had given me a right to go and live in dissipation at the tables of idlers.

"On the shore of the lake I met Guido Massarelli; my long absence had made him uneasy, and he was coming to look for me. I opened my heart to him, and he seemed to be greatly touched by my emotion. We sat down in a boat moored to the shore, and talked sentiment, ethics, philosophy, metaphysics, astronomy, and poetry, until the day began to dawn. Guido possessed a very noble intellect. And, indeed, this strange anomaly occurs in the case of many worthless characters, as if to make us doubt the validity of God's own logic.

"Next day we were on the road again, and some days later were attracting a crowd on the Piazza del Palazzo Vecchio, at Florence. Our receipts were excellent. If we had chosen, we could have travelled to Genoa by

wagon. We preferred to walk, however, although our loads, continually augmented by additional figures and scenery, had become very heavy.

“At Genoa, further success, and extraordinary receipts. We became such favorites that we were unable to comply even with the private engagements that were offered us. At first we had simply amused the common people, who gathered on the public square; but passers-by of higher rank had chanced to stop before our booth, and we could not resist the temptation of elevating our dialogue on the occasion to a correspondingly higher intellectual level.

“This was observed, and was spoken of in society. One of these casual listeners was a Marquis Spinola, who invited us to his house to amuse his children. We went masked, as usual, for we made our incognito an express condition of appearing. Our theatre was erected in the garden, and we had for an audience the best and most brilliant society of the city.

“For days afterwards, we knew not which way to turn. Our representations were in the greatest demand, and Guido demanded extremely high prices, which were conceded without hesitation. The mystery with which we surrounded ourselves, the pains we took to remain masked outside of our theatre, and the fantastic names we had assumed, added, no doubt, to our popularity. Every one readily guessed that we were two young men of good family; but while some guessed, also, that it was our own follies that had forced us to become wandering showmen, others tried to persuade themselves that we had adopted this employment merely for our amusement, and on a wager. Some went so far as to insist upon it that we were two young men of the city, who, as we learned later, were very well pleased with the imputation.

“At Nice, at Toulon, everywhere until we reached Marseilles, our progress was a series of triumphs. As we travelled slowly, our fame preceded us, and at every inn where we stopped we heard that persons had already come to inquire after us, and to engage our evenings.

“From Marseilles our success diminished steadily, until we reached Paris. My knowledge of the French lan-

guage was thorough; and, as I improved daily, I soon freed myself from the Italian accent which had prevented me at first from giving sufficient variety to the intonations of my actors. But Guido's accent, which was much more pronounced than mine, seemed to become stronger rather than otherwise, and our dialogue suffered in consequence. This, however, scarcely troubled me at all. Our career as professional buffoons was approaching an end, and I flattered myself that I should soon be able to command a more dignified position."

VI.

AFTER resting a few moments, Cristiano—we will hereafter call him Christian—continued his narrative as follows:

"But I must not forget to tell you of a well-known individual whom I happened to meet at this time; an interesting encounter that reconciled me for some days longer to my wandering life. The person to whom I refer is a very remarkable man, who still holds a most respectable position in Paris, and whose name is no doubt known to you: I mean Philip Ledru, commonly called Comus."

"Certainly," said M. Goeffe; "I have seen it stated in my scientific journal that this skilful prestigiator was a profound physicist, and that his researches upon the magnet had enriched science with various new instruments of rare perfection. Is it the same person?"

"The same, M. Goeffe. Comus has been appointed professor to the young French princes; he has prepared a set of nautical charts upon a new system, the result of an immense series of researches, undertaken by the king's order, and has furnished M. de la Perouse with a set of manuscript copies of these charts. Indeed, ever since the time when I first encountered him travelling about the country, in the character of a poor but learned man, furnishing the public with instruction in the form of amusement, he has

steadily and rapidly risen in the public esteem, in the favor of the ministry, and in the command of means for making practical the results of his profound knowledge.

“I first met this really great man, not exactly in the public streets of Lyons, but in a hall intended for the representations of wandering performers, and which we both wished to hire for our several purposes. As I was used to a good deal of absurdity or else coarseness on the part of such competitors, I was quite on my guard; but as soon as Comus addressed me, I was struck by his charming and even distinguished manners. He was a man of about thirty-five years of age, and had a magnificent constitution. Equally vigorous in body and in mind; equally quick in his movements and ready and agreeable in conversation, he was, in a word, one of those admirably endowed human beings who must from necessity emerge from obscurity. He inquired about my employment, and seemed astonished to find that I was sufficiently educated to be able to converse with him. I told him about my circumstances, and he conceived a friendship for me.

“After coming to one of our performances, with which he was greatly diverted, he invited us, in his turn, to attend his exhibition. This I witnessed, much to my advantage, for Comus possessed various secrets known only to himself; which, however, consisted merely in some single application, out of a thousand, of his own profound discoveries. He was very willing to explain them to me, and finding that I was not without intelligence, he invited me to be his associate—to share with him his projects and adventures. I declined this proposition with regret, and to my own loss; with regret, because Comus was one of the best, the most disinterested, and the most sympathetic men I have ever known; and to my own loss, because, although then a travelling exhibitor in natural science, he was a person who could not fail before long to find some serious and useful employment for his great talents. I had sworn to Massarelli not to desert him, and he had no taste for the sciences.

"This meeting, which I was not wise enough to turn to account as far as regards my material interests, was so beneficial to me in a moral point of view, that I shall always thank God for it. Allow me to repeat to you, as briefly as possible, the advice which this judicious and excellent man was so kind as to give me—in the pleasantest and most friendly way, and without a tinge of pedantry—during a quiet supper that we took together at the inn, amongst the chests that contained our luggage: for we were ready to start on the next morning.

"My dear *Goffredi*," he said, "I am sorry to part with you so soon: the grief that you feel I share with my whole heart. We have been together only for a few days, but in that time I have learned to know and to appreciate you. But do not be uneasy or discouraged about your future life. It will be prosperous, if it is useful. You see that my advice is very different from what is usually given: but, if you follow it, you will find that it is dictated by sound common sense. Others will tell you to sacrifice everything to ambition; I tell you to give all your true interests precedence before ambition—as it is commonly understood. I mean to say this: be perfectly indifferent both to fortune and fame, and pursue only one single object, that of enlightening your fellow-men, no matter by what means, and no matter in what condition they may be. All means are good and noble which seek this end. You are only a buffoon, and I am only a sorcerer! Very good: we will laugh at our pursuits, and persevere in them, as long as the marionettes and the juggling can be made subservient to good ends. What I tell you now is the secret of being happy in spite of everything. For my part, I understand only two principles, and these constitute but one and the same precept: to love mankind, and to take no account of their prejudices. Contempt for error is esteem for man, is it not? Possessed of this secret, you will always be sufficiently rich and sufficiently famous. As for the lost time that you have been regretting, you are quite young enough to make up for it. I, also, at one time, was a little ridiculous; a little vain of my youth, a little proud of my

strength! But, after wasting rather foolishly my patriotism and enthusiasm in the flower of my age. I retrieved my errors, and since then have advanced steadily. My organization is vigorous, and so is yours. I work twelve hours a day, and any one can do as much who is not feeble or ill. Apply yourself to study, and leave silly minds to seek after pleasure. They will not find it where they look for it, and you will find it where it is: that is, in a quiet conscience and the exercise of your nobler faculties!’

“Having thus spoken, Comus divided his receipts into two different sums, the one large and the other small: the latter he kept for himself; but the former he sent as a gift to the hospitals of the city. I was very much struck with the simplicity and cheerfulness with which he made this disposition of his money, as if performing an habitual and indispensable duty, and one so natural that it did not even occur to him to conceal it. I reproached myself also for having forgotten for so long a time the precepts and examples of my dear friends, the Goffredis; for all that M. Comus said and did reminded me of them. Thus it was, M. Goefle, that a wandering juggler preached to and converted a highway improvisatore.

“We reached Paris after a journey that had lasted three months, and which I recall as one of the most agreeable experiences of my life. I had not wasted my time on the road, for I had studied carefully both nature and society, as far as they were accessible to one who, without claiming remarkable perspicacity, is not more obtuse than his neighbors. I had taken notes, and fancied, since I had something to say and felt competent to say it, that I would have no sort of difficulty in living by my pen in the centre of letters and of arts.

“It was a sombre and melancholy autumn day when we entered the great city. I found it hard to imagine that any one could become accustomed to such a climate. and Guido, from the very first, showed visible signs of gloom and discouragement. We hired a miserable little furnished room at a very high rate, and having taken

possession, we adjusted our toilettes somewhat, dismantled our theatre, and locked the *burattini* in a box. It was our purpose to sell the establishment to some mountebank; and for a few days we devoted ourselves to studying the language, and visiting the monuments, exhibitions, and curiosities of the French metropolis.

"At the end of eight days our little capital was sadly diminished, and the worst of it was that I could see no means of renewing it. I found that my hopes had deceived me, or rather that I had not formed a true conception of what a really great city is, and of the frightful isolation into which a stranger, without means, friends, or recommendations, almost necessarily falls. I inquired about Comus, hoping that he would help me to find employment, but he had not yet returned from his tour, and, moreover, he had at that time only a provincial reputation. I sent also for the papers of Silvio Goffredi, proposing, by means of them, to publish under his name the results of his historical researches. I did not expect any pecuniary profit to accrue from this effort, but I hoped both to fulfil a duty and to secure an honorable position and a few friends. There were still several persons in Italy who retained their former regard for me. They sent the papers at my request, but the parcel was lost; it never reached me. My letters to the cardinal and to my young pupil remained unanswered, and others to whom I wrote confined themselves to empty professions of regard, but without venturing to commit themselves so far as to recommend me to such persons of good standing of my own nation as happened to be in Paris. Indeed, they advised me not to draw upon myself the observation of our ambassador, lest he should feel it his duty (he was a relative of Marco Melfi) to obtain a *lettre de cachet* from the king of France for my benefit.

"As soon as I realized what my position was, I resolved to rely upon myself alone; and you may rest assured, Monsieur Goefle, that I deserve some credit for maintaining my integrity under such circumstances; so abandoned, and reduced to such cruel straits in a city so

luxurious and full of temptations as Paris ! Only a short time before I had been living under a splendid sky ; a guest in palaces ! Then, a careless traveller, I had wandered through enchanted lands ; but now I was the gloomy and dejected tenant of a garret, struggling with cold, famine, and sometimes with disgust and discouragement. And yet, thanks to God, I came through victorious ; that is to say, I did not cheat anybody, and did not die of starvation. I succeeded in having a few little books published, and though I did not make any money by them, they gave me something of a position in a small circle of humble and modest men of science. I had the honor of furnishing, indirectly, the materials for a number of articles in the Encyclopedia, on natural science and on Italian antiquities. A marquis of literary taste employed me as his secretary, and clothed me decently ; and so I was once more afloat. If dress is not everything in Paris, it is safe to say, at least, that a respectable exterior is indispensable to one who would escape from poverty. Now, thanks to my marquis and my coat, society was once more open to me. This was another dangerous rock, and I once more risked being shipwrecked. Pray do not think me conceited if I say that it would have been much more to my advantage in some respects, if I had been as ugly and as awkward as your friend Stangstadius. A good-looking man without means, in society as it is now constituted, will everywhere find a door open to fortune—and to shame. No matter how circumspect he may be, he is sure to find himself pursued at every step by the eager and determined women of gallantry who swarm in great cities. Had I not been protected by the memory of the chaste and proud Sophia, I might probably have suffered myself to be enticed into the labyrinths of these insinuating and industrious animals.

“However, I overcame this danger ; but after a year’s residence in Paris, at the very moment when, thanks to my labor and economy, I was in a fair way to receive an independent position, I was seized with an extreme disgust for the city, and an unconquerable longing to travel

Massarelli was the chief cause of this disgust. He had not, like myself, been able to endure the privations and anguish of waiting. When we first began to be embarrassed, he carried off the theatre of marionettes from our lodging, and tried to earn a living in the public streets, amongst a class of people of the very worst sort. Unfortunately for him, he had not taken much pains to correct his accent, and he had no success. So he fell upon my hands again, and for several months, while I was in the greatest difficulties myself, I was obliged to feed and clothe him. At last, in spite of his constantly renewed oaths of reformation, and his efforts to work with me, he disappeared. But still, I did not get rid of him after all. Every few weeks he came to beg from me, and sometimes he was intoxicated. I shut the door in his face, but he dogged me about. At last, having contrived to make a little money, by means of various infamous transactions, he came once more, drunken and repentant, to weep in my bosom; he wanted now to return all that I had given him, and, moreover, to share with me *like a brother*! His money and his protestations disgusted me equally, and I refused all overtures. He lost his temper, and wanted to fight, but this I contemptuously refused. Then he undertook to strike me, and I was obliged to give him a beating. Next day he wrote to ask my forgiveness, but my patience was at an end; and as I used to meet him everywhere, sometimes even in good society—God only knows how he gained admission there—I was apprehensive of being compromised by some knavish act upon his part. I had not the selfish fortitude to expose publicly a man who had once been dear to me; and preferred rather to give up the conflict, and retreat myself. Fortunately, I was now able secure good recommendations, and, among others, those of Comus, who was just then creating a great excitement in Paris with his exhibitions in catoptries—that is, a phantasmagoria managed by mirrors, in which, instead of spectres and devils, he showed nothing but agreeable and graceful figures. His remarkable intellect, and his habits of penetrating observation, had given him such a

power of judging the faces of men, and such a knowledge of the human heart, that he could read people's very thoughts, almost as if endowed with an actual gift of divination. Moreover, his profound studies in applied mathematics enabled him to solve, while apparently merely performing diverting and ingenious feats, various problems entirely beyond the comprehension of ordinary people, and this skill many persons likened to magic.

"The age we live in is remarkably intelligent, and yet the love of the marvellous—a sentiment offering a singular contrast to its other tendencies, so powerful and ill-regulated in the past—still struggles in many minds against the severer authority of reason. You know something about this in your country, where your famous and learned Swedenborg is still more sought for as a sorcerer than as a seer; while he himself claimed to understand the secrets of another world. I do not say that Comus is more sincere or more virtuous than Swedenborg, who I know must be mentioned with entire respect, but he has more wisdom and earnestness of purpose. He does not pretend to act in virtue of any other laws than those which the human mind can discover; and he is generous in communicating his secrets to scientific men and travellers, who desire to utilize them in the cause of science.

"He received me with great kindness, and offered to take me with him to England, to assist him in his experiments. I was strongly tempted to accept, but my preferences led me to apply myself to mineralogy, botany, and zoology; and also to the study of manners and of societies. It seemed to me that England had been too thoroughly explored to furnish a promising field for new observations. And besides, Comus was at that time devoted to a special pursuit in which I did not think I could be useful to him. He was going to London to superintend personally the making of some very accurate instruments which he had not been able to have manufactured to his satisfaction in Paris. I did not like the idea of remaining for a year, or two years, in London; I

was tired of living in a great city ; I felt a violent longing for freedom, movement, above all for the privilege of being my own master. Though I had every reason to be pleased with my employers up to this time, I was so ill-suited to a dependent position that it really made me ill.

“ Comus introduced me to a great many eminent men ; such as MM. de Lacépède, Buffon, Daubenton, and Bernard de Jussieu. I took a lively interest in the rapid and magnificent progress of the Jardin des Plantes, and the zoölogical cabinet, which were daily being directed and enriched by these noble and learned men. Splendid gifts from wealthy persons in a private station in life, and the precious contributions of travellers, were constantly being sent to them. An irresistible ambition seized me to enroll myself in the number of these promoters of science ; these humble adepts, satisfied with benefiting humanity, without demanding either glory or profit. I saw, indeed, the ‘ tall man with ruffles,’ M. de Buffon, appropriating extensively, for the gratification of his vanity, the patient and modest labors of his associates. But suppose it is true that he had this weakness, that he wished to be *M. le Comte*, and to exert the feudal rights of his seigniorship ; that he sounded his own praises on every occasion, and claimed the credit of works, which, very frequently, he had only been consulted about ; — what mattered it ? This was his taste. It was not that of his generous and intellectual companions. They smiled, let him say what he pleased, and only worked the harder ; fully persuaded that individual interests are of no real importance in researches directed towards the advancement of the human species. Thus they were happier than he ; their happiness was that which Comus understood, and to which I aspired. It seemed to me that they had chosen the better part, and I was ambitious to follow in their steps. I offered them my services, therefore, after profiting to the best of my ability by their public lectures and private conversations. M. Daubenton was of opinion that my love of science and aptitude for the languages were qualities that would in-

sure my success, and that I ought to be encouraged. My poverty was the only obstacle.

“‘Science is growing rich,’ he said proudly, as he looked at the cabinet and garden, which were so rapidly increasing; ‘but scientific men are rather too poor to be great travellers. Indeed, they live lives of privation in every respect. You must be prepared for that.’

“I was prepared for everything. I had succeeded in saving a little money, which, in my judgment, would go a great way, considering the frugal sort of life from which I did not shrink. I secured a regular appointment to a scientific mission, so as to avoid being taken for a vagrant or a spy in foreign countries, and set out provided with a year’s support, and leaving the rest to Providence. And yet with the testimonials I carried, proving the innocent and honorable aim of my wandering life, I should have been able to obtain more or less pecuniary assistance from scientific bodies, and even from private individuals friendly to science. ‘But I was unwilling to make any such demands, for I knew how greatly the Jussieu family had impoverished itself in sacrifices of the kind, and I preferred to devote myself exclusively at my own risk and peril.

“Thus, once more, began for me a series of happy days. The time before me seemed infinite!—it would last, at least, as long as my resources. This was not saying a great deal; and to prolong my journey, and fully satisfy my passion for travelling, I practised, from the outset, the strictest economy. At my very first stopping-place, I put on a stout, coarse, mountain costume, bought an ass to carry the little baggage that I had, my books, instruments, and specimens, and proceeded on foot to the Swiss mountains. I will not dwell upon my labors, journeys and adventures. Whenever I have leisure, I intend to write an account of my travels; and even the recent loss of my journal will not be an insurmountable obstacle, thanks to my uncommonly good memory. In these solitary expeditions I recovered my excellent health, my careless ease, my confidence in the future, my natural gayety; all the qualities that my life

in Paris had been gradually destroying. I felt that I was in harmony with the memory of the Goffredis—that I was happy.

“My knowledge of botany and mineralogy was sufficient to enable me to execute what I had promised in these two specialties; and moreover, as I wasted no time in social indulgences, I had leisure to gratify my inclinations as an observer, and somewhat also as an artist and poet—that is, a person who feels the divine unity of the beauty of nature. At each important stopping place I forwarded reports, and even specimens, to Paris, and I wrote long letters to M. Daubenton, well knowing that the romantic impressions of a young man would not be displeasing to him.

“At the end of nine or ten months, I had reached the Carpathians, still accompanied by my ass, whom I found of the greatest service, and who was so docile and well trained to follow me everywhere, that he was never in my way. Just at this time, in a remote and lonely place, I met a beggar with a long beard, who was no other than Guido Massarelli. Divided between disgust and pity, I was hesitating whether to speak to him, when he recognized me, and approached with an aspect so humble and dejected, that pity carried the day. I was happy myself at that time, and therefore kindly disposed. Seated on the grass in a grove of tall trees, I was eating with a good appetite, while my ass was grazing a few steps off. To enable him to rest better, I had taken off his load, and had placed the pannier containing my provisions for the day between my knees. There was not much in it, but enough for two. Massarelli looked pale and feeble, as if dying of hunger.

“‘Sit down,’ I said, ‘and eat. I am quite certain it is through your own fault that you have been brought into this miserable condition, but it shall never be said that I did not help you once more.’

“He proceeded to tell his adventures, whether true or false, acknowledging his faults in words of a base humility, and yet, in fact, always excusing himself, by attributing them to the ingratitude or harshness of

others. I could only pity him for being what he was; and after half an hour's conversation, I gave him a few ducats and resumed my journey. We were going in opposite directions, to my great satisfaction; but I had not advanced a quarter of an hour when I was seized with a vertigo that obliged me to stop, overcome with weariness and a desire to sleep. I could not comprehend what had brought on this sudden indisposition, for I had never had such an attack in my whole life; and, having shared my bottle with Guido, I had scarcely drunk a glass of wine. I supposed that it might be a sort of sun-stroke, or was perhaps the effect of a poor night's sleep at the inn where I had stopped. At any rate, I laid down in the shade to take a nap. This may have been imprudent in a place so extremely solitary, but it was absolutely impossible for me to do otherwise; I was overcome by a heavy and irresistible drowsiness, like that of intoxication.

“When I awoke, my head was still heavy and vacant, and in fact I was feeling extremely ill; I was in the same place, but had been robbed of everything. I thought at first that it was the evening twilight, and that I had been asleep six hours; but when I saw the sun rising through the fog, and the dew glittering on the grass, the certainty was forced upon me that I had slept straight through a day and night. My ass had disappeared as well as my baggage, my pockets were empty; nothing had been left but the clothes on my back. While looking about, I observed one valueless object which the thieves had overlooked, or thought not worth taking. This was a little cocoa-nut cup which I always used in travelling, to avoid the vulgar habit of drinking from a bottle. It was this squeamishness that had cost me so dear; at a moment when my back was turned, Guido had thrown a narcotic into my cup. Even now, the bottom was lined with some kind of salt, crystallized. Guido was evidently no beggar, but the captain of a band of robbers. The footmarks all around me showed that a number of persons had been on the spot.

“I examined the immediate vicinity closely, and at

last espied something written with chalk upon a rock near by. It was in Latin, and to the following effect :

“ ‘My friend, I could have killed you, and it was my duty to do so ; but I pardon you. Sleep well.’ ”

“It was the handwriting of Guido Massarelli. Why was it his duty to have killed me? In return for the blows I had given him with my cane at Paris? That is possible, for it is certainly true that the Italian retains his revengeful disposition, and never forgets an injury, even when his mind and character have been utterly corrupted. But what could I do to revenge myself in my turn? There was nothing that would not require time, money, and investigation, and I was without a sou, and was beginning to feel hungry.

“ ‘Well,’ I thought, as I set out once more on my journey, ‘it was written that one day or other I should beg. But in spite of bad luck, I swear that I will not be a beggar long. I must find some new business, and get on my feet again.’ ”

“I made my way out of the mountains, and found a hospitable reception with a family of kind peasants, who even obliged me to accept some provisions for the road. They told me that a band of robbers infested the country, and that their chief was called the ‘The Italian.’ ”

“Still pushing on, I reached the province of Silesia. It was my intention to enter a complaint in the first town I came to, and put the authorities on the track of the robbers. As I walked along, thoughtful, and absorbed in a thousand plans, all equally impracticable, for once more filling my purse without appealing to public charity, I heard a short, uneven gallop behind me, and, turning round, was astonished to recognize my ass, my poor Jean, coming after me as well as he could, for he was wounded. People usually despise the ass! They are welcome to do so ; but this animal, in my opinion, is almost as intelligent as the dog. I had already had many convincing proofs that it is so, while travelling with this faithful servant ; and, on this occasion, he showed that he was capable of feeling a reasonable attachment, and was endowed with a mysterious and

truly extraordinary instinct. Stolen and carried off, he had undoubtedly run away, as soon as he had been relieved of his load. The robbers had fired on him, but he had kept on, disregarding their shots; he had found and followed my track, and now rejoined me with a bullet in his thigh.

"I confess that we had a scene worthy of Sancho Panza and his ass; nay, even more pathetic, for I had a wounded friend to assist. I extracted the ball which had lodged in the thigh of my interesting companion, and washed the wound with the most touching care. The poor beast submitted to be treated and bandaged with the stoicism of his own species, and with an intelligent confidence that is apparently not confined to ours. Now that I had recovered my ass, I was not entirely without resources. When the ball was extracted, he stopped limping. He was an uncommonly handsome animal, large and strong, and would be worth—. But I did not go so far as to embody in precise figures this cowardly and detestable idea! To my honor, I would state that I rejected it with indignation. There could be no question of selling my friend; the only problem was to feed two stomachs instead of one.

"I advanced towards Troppau as I best could. Jean ate thistles along the road, and I deprived myself of part of my allowance of bread, so as to supply him with a delicacy in his convalescence. At Troppau the common people took pity on me, and provided me with food and lodging, with that charity which is so highly valued and so meritorious among the poor. The authorities of the town gave but little credit to my story. My coarse garments were those of a pedestrian, and I had no documents whatever to prove that I was a person of studious pursuits, and entitled to confidence. I talked well, it is true: too well for a rustic; but these frontier countries are overrun by innumerable dexterous adventurers. Only a little while before, they informed me, an Italian, claiming to be a great nobleman, had given out that he had been robbed in the mountains, and it was afterwards dis-

covered that he was the chief of the very band he had pretended to denounce.

"I thought it best not to press the matter; for, from the recollection of Guido Massarelli, to the suspicion that I was associated with him, there was but a step. So I returned to my poor entertainers. They received me very kindly, blamed the conduct of their magistrates, and looking covetously at Jean, added:

"'Fortunately your ass is left, and you can sell him.'

"Seeing that I was not inclined to take their hint, they proceeded to make me a proposition, in the guise of advice. I might remain with them, they said, for two or three months, if I could be contented with their way of living. During this time I could look for work, if there was anything I was able to do; and if I could pay my expenses at the end of the term agreed upon, I would not be obliged to leave Jean as an equivalent. This was good advice, and I accepted it; resolving, however, that I would dig in the earth, if necessary, so as to release my pledge, poor Jean, who was still useful to his master.

"My landlord was a shoemaker. In order to show that I was not idle, I asked whether I could help him in any way, though I did not know his trade.

"'I see that you are a good fellow,' he said, 'for you have an honest face. There's a fair to-morrow in a village two leagues from here, to which I shall not be able to go. Load your ass with my goods, go in my stead, and sell all the shoes you can. You shall have ten per cent. of the profits.'

"The next morning I was at my post selling shoes, as if I had never done nothing else in my whole life. I knew nothing at all about the tricks peculiar to this sort of business, whether conducted on a small or grand scale, but it occurred to me to pay all the women compliments on their little feet; and the people were so amused by my extravagant nonsense, that my entire load was disposed of in a few hours. In the evening I returned gayly home to my employer, who was surprised at my success, and obstinately refused to let me deduct the price of my board from my share of the profits.

"Once more, therefore, I was provided with a trade, and a supply of pocket-money sufficient for the necessities of my new position. Hans, my employer, now sent me on a three days' tour through the neighborhood, and I succeeded in selling off some old stock that had been on his hands a long time. On my return, he paid me more than he had agreed, but when I said something about leaving him, he flew into a tremendous passion, and then shed tears; he treated me, in short, like an ungrateful son, and ended by offering to give me his daughter in marriage, if I would remain. The girl was pretty, and threw me artless and tender glances. I behaved like a fool, or so my former gay companions would have said. It is certain that I did not even attempt to kiss her, and that I made my escape in the night, taking with me Jean and two rix dollars, and leaving an equal sum behind me to pay my board at the house of the good shoemaker of Troppau.

"It was quite indifferent to me where I went, provided only that I could obtain sufficient means to continue my journey without being obliged to confide to the persons in the various towns of Germany and Poland to whom I had brought letters of introduction, a story of disaster, of which I could furnish no proof, except my destitution. The suspicions of the burgomasters of Troppau had cured me of the idea of relating my misfortunes. My testimonials were lost, and I had nothing but probable assertions with which to replace them. Now, no story ever seems probable when you are asking assistance. However, this did not make me at all unhappy. I was already accustomed to my situation, and had one more occasion in my life to observe that to-morrow always comes for those who have patience with to-day.

"Two days later, I entered a poor tavern, and sat down at a table. Opposite me was a short, strong-built young fellow, who was seated with his elbows leaning on the table, and who seemed to be asleep. They brought me a pot of beer and some bread and cheese, for which I paid a half-zwanziger. On this allowance I had money enough to last eight days. When the landlady spoke to

the young man at the other side of the table he made no reply, and a little after, as he raised his head, I saw that he had been crying.

“‘You are hungry,’ I said to him, ‘and have no money to pay for your supper.’

“‘Fact!’ he answered, laconically.

“‘Very well,’ I replied, ‘where there’s enough for one, there’s enough for two. Help yourself.’

“Without answering a word, he drew a knife from his pocket and cut into my bread and cheese. When he had eaten in silence, he thanked me briefly, and with an appearance of sincerity, and I had the curiosity to ask him the cause of his distress. He told me his name—I forget what it was—but the name he was travelling under was Puffo. He was from Leghorn—a rather poor recommendation, at least in Italy, for persons of a certain class. In the opinion of the sailors all along the Mediterranean coast, to call a man a *Livornese* is almost equivalent to calling him a pirate. My friend probably would have justified the prejudice; he had been a sailor, and a little of a freebooter. At present he was a strolling mountebank.

“I listened to him without much interest, for he did not narrate well, and it is only the way in which they are told that gives any value to the stories of such adventurers; in substance they are all pretty much the same. However, when this man began to speak about his unprofitable theatre, I pricked up my ears and asked him what sort of representations he gave.

“‘*Mon Dieu!*’ he cried, ‘that’s the kind, and it’s the worst business I ever had anything to do with. The devil take the man who put it into my head!’

“As he spoke, he pulled a marionette from his bag, and threw it angrily on the table.

“An exclamation of surprise escaped me. This marionette, frightfully dirty and worn out, was my own handiwork. It was a *burattino* of my own make! Yes, indeed, it was my leading character, the chief of my company, my own witty and charming Stentarello, the ornament of all my performances in the towns of the Apennines,

the darling of the pretty Genoese women, the child of my scissors and my fancy, the very pillar of my theatre.

“ ‘What!’ I cried, ‘you wretched fellow! You own Stentarello, and can’t make money with him?’

“ ‘They told me,’ he replied, ‘that he had made a great deal of money in Italy. The man who sold him to me in Paris said that he had bought him of a well-dressed Italian gentleman, who declared that he had made his fortune with him. Perhaps it was you?’

“ He went on to say that he had been quite successful in France in the public streets with our theatre and actors; and that as he knew several languages, he had tried travelling abroad, but that fortune had deserted him; he had gone on from bad to worse, up to the very moment when I met him. He had now resolved to sell ‘the shop,’ as he called it, and to try and train a bear, which he intended to catch in the mountains.

“ ‘Come,’ said I, ‘show me your theatre, and let me see what you can do.’

“ He accordingly took me to a barn, where I helped him set up his establishment; and I recognized the best members of my troupe among wretched ordinary marionettes, covered with rags and injuries. Puffo proceeded to play me a scene as a specimen of his powers. He manœuvred the *burattini* dexterously enough, and was not without a certain coarse wit, but it really pained me to the heart to see my actors fallen into such hands, and reduced to playing such parts. But when I thought about it, I saw that Providence must have brought us together — myself and my actors — for our mutual good. I proceeded at once to give a representation in the village, and received in all a ducat for it, to the utter stupefaction of Puffo, who from that moment entirely abandoned to my guidance theatre, actors, and even the responsibility of his own destiny.

“ I now felt that I was really under the protection of heaven, for I had found once more the means of prosecuting my travels with comfort, without incurring any indebtedness, and without exposing my name and my features to the caprice of the public. In a very few days

all the marionettes were dismounted, cleaned, fresh painted, new clothed, and properly packed in a convenient and portable chest; the theatre was refitted in like manner, and enlarged to admit two operators. Puffo I engaged as an assistant, his duty being to keep the establishment in good order, to take charge of it, and, at the same time, to carry part of it on his stout shoulders, as he was already in the habit of doing; for I was more than ever determined to devote Jean to the service of science, and to employ him in carrying the materials and specimens which I was collecting.

“Puffo is certainly a poor assistant. He is slow-witted, and yet he never breaks down; for he has the gift of talking without saying anything. He has a bad accent in every language; but, at any rate, he can make himself understood in several, which is a great point, and his chief recommendation. In the dialogue he takes but little part, but I have succeeded in curing him of his coarse habit of swearing. I put into his hands the popular, low comedy scenes, which serve as interludes, to give me a few minutes’ rest. When three or four actors are on the stage, I make use of his hands, and carry on all the parts of the conversation myself, with sufficient skill to persuade the audience that they are listening to several different voices. But you have seen my performances, M. Goefle, and know that I succeed in amusing. However, we did nothing very remarkable in Germany, and it occurred to me that perhaps we should do better in Poland, for the Poles have the wit of the French and the taste of Italians. We accordingly traversed Poland, and at Dantzic, after a successful tour of six weeks, embarked for Stockholm, where we have done extremely well. It was while there that I received the invitation of the Barou de Waldemora. I accepted it with pleasure, knowing that it would enable me to see a country which I have found more interesting than any that I have hitherto visited. I have always loved the north, whether from the strong contrasts which it offers to southern countries, or from a patriotic instinct that has influenced me ever since my childhood. And yet nothing is less certain than the

northern origin which was attributed to my childish language — altered, imperfectly spoken, or half-forgotten as it was — by the learned philologist to whom I have referred. No matter; whether dream or presentiment, I have always beheld in imagination the romantic country which is now before my eyes; and it was by way of affording myself a pleasure-trip that I lengthened my present journey. I came across Lake Malar, and thence down to Lake Wetter, so as to explore the whole region of the great lakes.

“It was, however, written that I was to be pursued by mishaps. Puffo, who has grown fat since I have supported him, and who is beginning to be afraid of fatigue, wanted to hire a sleigh to cross that mysterious Lake Wetter, whose depths are apparently troubled by volcanic disturbances. The ice broke in, and I lost my clothes and my money. Fortunately, Puffo was at that moment walking, and helped out the driver, but the horse and sleigh were lost. Fortunately also, I had followed the shore, with Jean, the theatre, my actors, and my scientific materials. So, thank heaven, all is not lost, and to-morrow I shall be in funds again, for I am to give a representation, for a sum agreed upon, at the chateau of the Snow Man.”

“Well,” said M. Goeffe, as he once more took the hand of Christian Waldo, “your story has interested and amused me. I don’t know whether you told it with any particular pleasure to yourself, but your quick way of talking while you walked about the room, your Italian gesticulation, and your face, which is certainly expressive and prepossessing, whatever country it may belong to, have made your recital very attractive. You have a fine mind and an excellent heart, and the faults of which you accuse yourself seem to me very trifling, compared with the evil courses into which you might easily have fallen, thrown, as you were, so early into the world, without advisers or resources, and with a handsome face, too — which is a real instrument of perdition for either sex, in a place so corrupt as Paris or Naples.”

“But do you believe, Monsieur Goeffe, that society is more moral or pure here at the north? I should be

pleased to think that such is the case, but what I have seen at Stockholm —”

“Ah, my dear boy! if you judge of us by the intrigues, vanity, violence, and infamous venality of our nobility, whether of the cap or hat faction, you will believe us the very last of all the nations in the universe. This would be wrong, however, for as a people we are really good. It only needs a revolution, or a considerable war, to bring to the surface our great qualities — the particles of pure gold sunk to the bottom. Just now you see only the froth on the surface. But to return to yourself: you have not explained to me about your residence in Stockholm. How is it, in a place so full of intrigue and distrust, that you could wear a mask, and yet escape annoyance from the three or four different police organizations that are at work for the different parties?”

“Because I do not wear a mask, as you can see very well for yourself, *Monsieur Goeffe*; it would be very troublesome to do that, and as soon as I am a hundred steps away from my booth, it is easy enough, with a little adroitness, and a few very simple precautions against the observation of the inquisitive, to remove it, and go with my face uncovered. I am not important enough to make anybody very determined to see me, and the slight mystery that I keep up does a good deal towards maintaining my popularity. And, after all, I have not so far retained my prejudices as a society man, that I should be much distressed to have my mask fall off some day in the street, and to be recognized by a chance passenger as a very obscure adept of science, who occupies himself about his studies at other hours, and in other portions of the city.”

“Ah! that is just what you have not told me. When you are at Stockholm you have, on occasion, another name than *Christian Waldo*, and another lodging besides that where *Jean* and *Puffo* live, and the rest of your troupe in their boxes?”

“Exactly, *Monsieur Goeffe*. As to the name — do you really want to know it?”

“Certainly I do. You do not distrust me?”

“Oh, if you are afraid of that, I comply at once, with

pleasure. The name is only Dulac — the French for my original fanciful name of del Lago. I assumed it at Paris, as a precaution against any accident which might draw upon me the notice and vengeance of the Neapolitan ambassador."

"Very good. And under that name you have succeeded in establishing good connections in Stockholm?"

"I have hardly tried to do so, as I did not feel any need of haste. I wanted, in the first place, to become acquainted with the scientific and artistic riches of the city, and then to study the physiognomy of the inhabitants as well as their tastes and customs. A stranger, without friends, finds it extremely easy to study the manners and prevailing sentiments of a people by haunting their places of public resort. This is the method I adopted, and my present purpose is to become familiar with the whole of Sweden, and then to put myself in communication with the leading men of science at Stockholm and Upsal, especially M. Linnæus. By that time I must receive the testimonials for which I have written to Paris, and, at any rate, shall perhaps have something of interest to submit to that illustrious man. I may find specimens in distant localities that he has overlooked, and be able to afford him pleasure by offering them to him. There is no journey in which useful discoveries, or useful observations upon matters already recorded, may not be made. When a young man visits a great master, he is bound to bring tribute from his studies or his explorations; otherwise he only occupies valuable time in the mere gratification of his own vanity or curiosity. You said something about the police: they let me entirely alone after one brisk examination, in which my answers were frank, and seemed quite satisfactory. The good people with whom I lodged, and who treated me as kindly as if I were one of their own family, readily guaranteed my good conduct, and kept from the public the little secret of my double individuality. So you see, Monsieur Goeffe, that at present I am excellently situated, and may well feel in very good spirits, having command of my own movements, a

sufficiently profitable occupation, the love of science, and all the world open before me ! ”

“ But you lost your money in Lake Wetter — ”

“ Oh, but the lakes, Monsieur Goeffe, are certainly inhabited by good spirits, with whom I am in relations, without knowing it. Am I not Christian *del Lago* ? Either the troll of Lake Wetter will return me my purse when I am least expecting it, or he will see that it comes into the hands of some poor fisherman, who will have the good of it, so that it will be a capital arrangement any way.”

“ But still, — have you any money in your pocket, my boy ? ”

“ Absolutely nothing, Monsieur Goeffe,” replied the young man, laughing. “ I had exactly enough to get here, by pinching my own stomach a little, so as to allow my attendant and my ass all they wanted ; but I am to receive thirty rix dollars this evening for my performance ; and after enjoying this capital breakfast in company with yourself and this excellent stove, and in sight of the splendid landscape all set with diamonds, that I see shining out yonder, through the smoke with which our pipes have filled the room, I feel myself the richest and most fortunate of men.”

“ You are decidedly an original,” said M. Goeffe, rising, and knocking the ashes from his pipe. “ You are a singular mixture of the man and the child, the scientist and the adventurer. It even seems to me that you are extravagantly enjoying this last phase of your experience ; and that instead of finding it disagreeable, you are making your assumed and rather exaggerated pride an excuse for protracting it.”

“ Permit me, Monsieur Goeffe,” answered Christian ; “ in the matter of pride there is no middle course ; it must be everything or nothing. I have tried poverty, and I know how easy it is, in poverty, to become degraded. One who is left to depend entirely upon his own resources, must therefore accustom himself not to fear poverty ; he must even know how to make it a source of amusement. I have told you how it distressed

me to be poor in a great city. There, among temptations of every kind, such a position is very dangerous to a man who is young and vigorous, and who has known what it is to be carried away by passion. Here, on the contrary, on my travels, that is to say, at liberty, and protected by an incognito which will allow me to-morrow to assume a respectable position in society, I feel as gay as a school-boy in vacation; and I confess that I am in no haste to assume again the chains of constraint and the annoyances of conventionality."

"After all, I understand it," said the doctor. "My imagination is not duller than other people's; and I can easily conceive that there is a romantic pleasure in such a wandering, careless life. Yet you are fond of society. It was not for the sake of investigating the frozen mountains at midnight that you borrowed my dress suit."

At this moment the door opened, and Ulphilas, to whom M. Goeffle had no doubt given orders, came to say that the horse and sleigh were ready. Ulph seemed quite sober.

"What!" cried the doctor with surprise, "what time is it? Noon? It is impossible! That old clock has gone crazy! But no," he continued, looking at his watch, "it is noon, really; and I must go and consult with the baron over the great lawsuit, on account of which I have come here. It surprises me, by the way, since he knows I am here, that he should not have thought fit to send before now and inquire after me!"

"But his lordship, the baron, did send," said Ulph; "did I not tell you, M. Goeffle?"

"Not at all."

"He sent an hour ago, to say that he was ill last night, or that he would have come himself—"

"Here? You exaggerate the baron's politeness, my dear Ulph. The baron never comes to Stollborg!"

"Very seldom, Monsieur Goeffle; but—"

"Well, well! And father Stenson—is there no way of seeing him? I must make the good old gentleman a little visit before I go over to the chateau. Is he as deaf as ever?"

"A great deal more so, Monsieur Goeffe; he will not hear a single word you say."

"Well, then, I will talk by signs."

"But, Monsieur Goeffe, the fact is my uncle don't know you are here."

"Ah, he doesn't? Well, he will find it out."

"He will scold me terribly for not having told him, and for having allowed you—"

"To do what? To lodge in this room, I suppose? Very well; tell him that I took possession without asking your permission."

"Only imagine," added M. Goeffe, in French, to Christian, "that we are here unlawfully, and without the knowledge of M. Stenson, the overseer of the old chateau. And another very strange thing is, that the said Monsieur Sten, as well as his estimable nephew here present, are so convinced that the old ruin is haunted by unhappy and malevolent spirits, that they are very reluctant to live here at all."

As he said this, M. Goeffe's smiling face became serious all at once, as if, though in the habit of laughing at such things, he really was reproaching himself for doing so; and he abruptly asked Christian if he believed in apparitions.

"Yes—in hallucinations," replied Christian, without hesitation.

"Ah! Have you ever seen any, then?"

"Sometimes—in a fever, or under some powerful mental preoccupation. In the latter case they were not so distinct as in the fever, and I could see that it was an illusion; but the appearances made a sufficient impression upon me to trouble me a good deal."

"Just so—exactly so!" cried M. Goeffe. "Well, only imagine—but I'll tell you this evening; there's no time now. I must go, my friend; I shall go and see the baron. He will perhaps detain me to dinner—at two o'clock. But in any event I will return as soon as possible. Ah, by the way—will you do me a service during my absence?"

"Two—three, if you wish, Monsieur Goeffe; what is it?"

"To take my valet-de-chambre up out of his bed."

"To wake him, you mean?"

"No, no! To take him up, to put on his clothes, button his gaiters, put him into his breeches; they are very tight, and he is not strong enough—"

"Oh, I understand; some old servant—an old friend, ill, or infirm?"

"No, not exactly. Stay, here he is! What a miracle! He has dressed himself all alone! Very well done, Master Nils! Why, you are improving! Up at noon, and dressed yourself! Haven't you fatigued yourself too much?"

"No, Monsieur Goeffe," said the child, with a triumphant air. "See, I have buttoned my gaiters nicely."

"A little crooked; but it's done, at any rate; and now I suppose you will go and rest yourself until night?"

"Oh no, Monsieur Goeffe: I want something to eat; I am very hungry; it has kept me from sleeping well for an hour at least."

"There," said M. Goeffe to Christian, "you see what manner of serving-man my housekeeper provided me with! At present, I shall leave him under your charge. Make him obey you, if you can; for my part, I have quite given up trying. Come, Ulph, go on; I'll come after you. Well, what's the matter? what is it?"

"They brought a letter for you a little while ago," answered Ulphilas, whose ideas became more luminous in proportion as the sun ascended towards the zenith, "and I put it in my pocket, and had forgotten—"

"To give it to me? Too true! You see, Christian, how well you are waited upon at Stollborg."

M. Goeffe opened the letter, and read as follows, interrupting himself at every sentence to make comments in French:

"My dear advocate—"

"I know that handwriting! It's the Countess Elveda! A great coquette. The Russian party in petticoats!

““ Let me see you before any one else. I know the baron expects you at noon. Have the goodness to leave Stollborg a little early, and come to my room. I want to talk to you about some matters of importance — ”

“Matters of importance! Some silly piece of wickedness, as black as charcoal, and consequently as plain to be seen as charcoal on snow! Faith, it's too late! the time is past.”

“Certainly, the time is past,” observed Christian, “and what she wants to tell you is not worth the trouble of hearing.”

“Ah! ah! Then you know what it is?”

“Perfectly; I'll tell you about it at once, and I'm not afraid that you will lend your influence to helping on a scheme as horrible as it is ridiculous. The countess wants to marry her pretty niece, Margaret, to the dead-and-alive old Baron Olaus.”

“Yes, I know that very well, and I have openly laughed at the idea. Marry such a beautiful May to such a pale December! One would have to be as much of a white-cap as the peak of Sylfallet to think of such a thing!”

“Ah, I was sure you would feel so. Is it not abominable, Monsieur Goeffe, to propose to sacrifice Margaret in such a way?—”

“Hallo! Margaret? Why, you and Margaret must be on very intimate terms?—”

“Very far from it. I have only seen her. She is charming.”

“She is so considered. But the countess—how the devil did you come to know her, and how did you learn about her private plans?”

“That is another story; I will tell you about it if you have time—”

“What? No, I have not; but here's a postscript that I did not notice. I don't understand it at all:

““I must compliment you upon your nephew's fine figure and his wit.”

“My nephew! I have no nephew! Is the countess crazy?

““ Nevertheless, his good manners failed him for once,

and very reprehensibly. He really deserves to receive a severe reprimand from you for having been guilty of such rudeness! But I will talk it over with you, and try to make up for his foolishness—I almost wanted to say insolence."

"Rudeness! Insolence! *Monsieur* my nephew seems to have been well occupied! But where the devil am I going to find the young gentleman, to give him his severe reprimand?"

"Oh, dear *Monsieur Goeffe*!" said Christian, in a piteous tone, "you will not have to look very far. How is it you have not reflected that if I could obtain admission to the ball-room without my mask, last night, it cannot have been by the name of Christian Waldo?"

"I do not deny that! Then it was under the name of *Goeffe*?"

"My invitation was in my pocket under that honorable name."

"So, sir," said M. *Goeffe*, with severity, while his eyes sparkled with anger, "you don't content yourself with carrying off other people's toilet, from hair-powder down to shoe-soles inclusive, but you must also go so far as to take their names, and leave them to be responsible for the follies you may choose to commit. That is altogether beyond endurance!"

Here good-natured M. *Goeffe*, in spite of himself, burst out laughing, at the absurd predicament of Christian Waldo. The handsome and passionate young man, who found it difficult to bear so direct a reproof, seemed tempted to make rather a sharp reply, and then his anger was increased by the conduct of the servants. On one side Ulph, perceiving from M. *Goeffe's* tone that he was angry, although he did not understand a word that he said, was unconsciously imitating his looks and gestures, while little Nils, quite as ignorant of the facts in question, placed himself opposite Christian, in a haughty and almost threatening attitude.

Provoked by these two absurd figures imitating and burlesquing M. *Goeffe*, Christian was strongly tempted to knock down the man and kick the boy, but he knew

perfectly well that he was in the wrong, and he was, moreover, much pained at having offended so kind and amiable a person as the doctor of laws. Indignation and repentance, therefore, were depicted alternately upon his expressive countenance, and with such vividness that the lawyer was quite disarmed. His laugh at once disarmed his two satellites, who began to laugh also with returning confidence, and went about their business, while Christian gave M. Goeffe a brief account of his defiance of the baron, which the Countess Elveda called rude and insolent, but for which, in his opinion, he was not at all to blame. M. Goeffe, pressed as he was for time, listened attentively, and when he had finished, said :

“Assuredly, my dear boy, you have done nothing to dishonor the name of Goeffe ; on the contrary, your conduct was that of a gentleman, but you have none the less placed me in a cruel embarrassment. Whether or not Baron Olaus remembers his epileptic attack—for which, it seems, he is indebted to you—he will not forget, you may rest assured, that you have offended him. As you have been told, he is a man who never forgets anything, and you will do well to disappear at once in your character of Goeffe, since Goeffe you have chosen to become. Do not quit this chamber without being masked ; become Christian Waldo again, and you have nothing to fear.”

“But pray tell me what should I have to fear from the baron, even if I should present myself to him with my face uncovered ? Is he actually capable of having me assassinated ?”

“I know nothing about that, Christian ; I swear to you, upon my honor, nothing at all ; you may confidently believe me on this point. If, in my business relations with him, I had gathered the least proof of the acts he is charged with, those relations would be discontinued. I am very indifferent to lucrative patronage, and I should tell my client some very plain truths, whether it did him any good or not. Nevertheless, there are some reports so well authenticated, and there are so many cases where misfortunes have occurred to persons who have opposed the baron, that I have sometimes asked myself if he had

not the evil eye—the *jettatura*, as you call it in Italy. At any rate, not to bring any unnecessary bad luck upon myself, please allow me to report that my nephew is absent; that he started this very morning on a distant journey.”

“You may rely upon my absolute prudence, since I have been the means of exposing you to a risk. I will not leave the room without being masked, or so disguised that no one shall recognize me for the rather too gallant and chivalrous stranger who danced at the ball last night.”

M. Goesle and Christian Waldo shook hands upon this agreement. Nils, whose services had been confined to eating his breakfast during the conversation, was now well wrapped up in furs by his master, who was obliged to lift him upon the driver’s seat of the sleigh, and to place the reins and whip in his hands. Once seated, however, he drove off like an arrow, and descended the steep slope of the rock with skill and confidence. To drive a horse was the one thing that he knew how to do, and did without murmuring.

As for Ulph, he proceeded to make up the bed in which Nils had slept, for Christian, and to prepare the sofa, which was quite large enough to be comfortable, for the child, as M. Goesle had directed before his departure. Then he went to wait upon his uncle, but always discreet in concealing his disobedience, he did not say a single word about the presence of visitors in the donjon.

VII.

THE reader has perhaps not forgotten that old Stenson lived in a pavilion at the end of the small second court, which, together with the outer enclosure, which was somewhat larger, and the buildings adjoining, composed the dilapidated manor of Stollborg. There was a legend connected with the original erection of this ancient castle. At the time of the first introduction of Christianity into Sweden, it was said to have grown out of the

rock in one night, in consequence of a vow of the pagan castellan, whose house (then built of wood) had nearly been blown off into the lake by an autumnal gale, and who had thereupon promised to embrace the new religion, if heaven would protect him securely from the wind. The roof of the house had already been carried away, but scarcely had he pronounced his vow, when a granite tower arose, as if by enchantment, from the rock. The castellan was forthwith baptized, and no hurricane could ever again harm his strongly and solidly-built habitation.

Notwithstanding this veracious history, the antiquaries of the country have the hardihood to assert that the square tower of Stollborg dates no further back than to the reign of King Birger, that is to the fourteenth century. However that may be, the chateau and its small domain, in the fifteenth century, became the property of a brave gentleman of the name of Waldemora. In the seventeenth century, Olaf de Waldemora became a favorite of Queen Christina, who, by arbitrarily alienating portions of the crown domains, conferred upon him considerable landed estates in this part of Dalecarlia. History does not name this Waldemora as a lover of the fantastic inheritrix of Gustavus Adolphus. Possibly, in some strait for money, the queen may have sold him these valuable estates at a low price. It is certain that at the reduction of 1680, when the energetic Charles XI. revised the titles of all grants of land, and reunited to the crown domain all that had been unlawfully alienated by his predecessors — a terrible but salutary measure, to which Sweden owes the endowment of her universities, schools, and magistracy, the creation of the post-office, the army *indelta*, and other benefactions, for which the “old caps” had hardly forgiven the crown at the time of our story — at this time the titles of the Baron de Waldemora were found valid; he retained the great estates which he had inherited from his grandfather, and completed the embellishments of the new chateau, built by the latter upon the shore of the lake, and called by his name.

One tower was all that remained standing of the old family chateau. This tower appeared to be extremely

lofty, in consequence of the great substructure of masonry built up to its base from the very edge of the water, but it was in fact but two stories high, and contained only the bear-room and the guard-room, which were on the ground floor, almost on a level with the court, and two or three chambers above, where for twenty years, that is, ever since the door on the staircase had been built up, no person had entered. The rest of the manor had been rebuilt several times, and formed, what is called in Norway, a *gaard*; or, in other words, an assembly of several families living in a community. Dwelling-rooms, kitchens, dining-rooms, stables, and store-rooms, in such communities, instead of being brought together as much as possible under one roof, as is the common practice, form separate buildings, each with a roof of its own; so that altogether they present the aspect of a numerous group of small houses entirely distinct from each other. Many customs prevail equally in Sweden and Norway, especially along the mountainous frontier of Dalecarlia. At the period when Stollborg, deserted for the new chateau, became a mere farmstead, there were several *gaards*, similar to the one we have described, scattered through the country. As is commonly the case all over Sweden, and in all countries where they build in wood, these premises had often caught fire, and the more ancient of the little edifices still showed traces of it. Their charred ridge-poles and warped roofs were sharply defined, like black spectres, upon the white background of the mountain.

The court, surrounded by its mossy shed, which gave a unity — such as it was — to all these different buildings, and from whose eaves hung a glittering fringe of icy stalactites, thus presented the appearance of a group of abandoned Swiss chalets. The farm establishment had long ago been transferred elsewhere, and the whole manor had been left under the charge of Stenson, who no longer had any repairs made upon the worthless houses, which were now only used to store fodder and dry vegetables. The rough flags of the court were furrowed in all directions by a thousand irregular little hollows, ploughed by the violence of currents in thaws; not one of the doors was

on its hinges, and it seemed as if, unless prevented by some vow as efficacious as that of the first castellan, the least gust of the winds of spring or fall would sweep the ruinous structures off into the lake.

The second court, which was in the rear of this one, was a modern addition, much less picturesque, but infinitely more comfortable. It had been built by the Baron Olaus de Waldemora at the time when he inherited the property of his brother Adelstan. He caused this second small *gaard* to be erected for his faithful Stenson, so as to prevent the latter, who had a horror of the place, from going to live elsewhere. This addition consisted of another group of buildings, lower than the first, and upon the opposite slope of the rock. Their steep roofs rested at the back against the solid rock itself, and were constructed in the singular manner usual in that country, with a layer of pine logs well caulked with moss, covered with strips of birch bark, over which is laid finally a bed of earth turfed on the top. This turf, on the roofs of rustic cottages in Sweden, is very carefully tended, as is well known, and is sometimes laid out like a garden with flowers and shrubs. The grass upon them is very thick and rich, and the cattle find it their choicest pasturage.

It was in this portion of the old manor, called especially the *gaard*, while the other was called the court, that Stenson had lived for twenty years. Of late, he had become so old and feeble that he hardly ever left his own house, which was well warmed, very neatly furnished, and painted on the outside of an iron-rust red. Here he was certainly very conveniently situated. His dwelling-rooms were separate from his nephew's lodging, and he had a kitchen in one small edifice, and a dairy in another. This only served, however, to render the existence of the mysterious old man more monotonous and melancholy. It was observed, or at least it had been observed when the house was built, how careful he had been to have all the doors and windows looking away from the tower. The only communication between the two buildings was a small side-door, and to reach Stenson's pavilion it was

necessary to go through a narrow zigzag passage. It looked as if he had been afraid to have a door opening directly towards the tower, lest he should see it. But he may have barricaded himself in this way merely as a precaution against the west wind, which blew from that direction.

As if in confirmation of the reports current about him, it was extremely rare for Stenson to quit his house, unless to enjoy a little sunshine in the small orchard at the water's edge. Even here he always turned his back to the tower as he walked, and when the declining sun threw the slender shadow of the weathercock upon his alleys, it was said that he would leave them and flee precipitately into his house, as if he were filled with horror and pain by this ill-omened shade. The freethinkers of the new chateau — a major-domo and footmen of the modern sort — attributed his peculiarities to the excessive caution and timidity, carried almost to monomania, of a frail and sickly old man; but Ulphilas and his companions regarded them as the irrefragable proof that the gloomy old castle was haunted by evil spirits and frightful spectres. Never, for twenty years, they said, had Stenson crossed the court and entered the western gate. Whenever business called him to the new chateau, he went by way of the little orchard, at whose base his own boat used to lie in the summer.

The presence of the baron at the new chateau — his usual residence when he was not attending to his duties as a member of the Stendørne, or Diet — made no changes in Stenson's daily life; but still Ulphilas had for some days observed that his uncle was singularly agitated. He asked questions concerning the donjon, as if he was solicitous about the preservation of this accursed old giant. He inquired of Ulph whether he went there from time to time to ventilate the bear-room, at what hours his visits were made, and whether he had seen anything remarkable there. To-day, Ulph, not without remorse, but without hesitation, told him a lie; he shook his head and shrugged his shoulders as a sign that he had seen nothing new. In fact, Ulph had strong

reasons for hoping that Stenson, who was confined to his room by the cold, would not learn anything about what had happened; and he had heard the rattling of certain crowns intended for him, in the pocket of M. Goeffe, without seeing any signs that the old vaults of Stollborg proposed to crumble with indignation for so small a matter. Without being greedy, Ulph did not dislike making a little money, and perhaps he was beginning to feel somewhat reconciled to the donjon.

After telling this direct falsehood, and serving his uncle's second meal, he was going away, when the old man asked for a certain Bible which he seldom used, and which stood on a particular shelf of his library. Stenson directed him to place it before him on the table, and then motioned him to retire. Ulph, however, was curious to see what his uncle was about, and as he was very certain that he would not be heard, he came in again in a moment, and standing behind the old man's chair, peeped over and saw him pass the knife at random between the leaves of the large book, and then open it, and look attentively at the verse where the point of the knife had stopped. Three times he tried this experiment; a practice half devout and half cabalistic, that prevails even among the Catholics of the north, for inquiring of the Almighty the secrets of the future, according to the interpretation of the words supposed to be indicated by destiny. When he had performed this ceremony, Stenson buried his face in his hands upon the closed book, as if to consult it with his brain, after having questioned it with his eyes; and Ulph went away, a good deal disquieted with the result of the experiment. He had read the three verses over his uncle's head. They were these, in the order in which they had chanced to occur:

"Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears."

"Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?"

"A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children; and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just."

Detached verses from this mysterious and sublime book will generally adapt themselves to almost any meaning which the imagination is desirous of obtaining. Accordingly, old Sten, who had trembled at the first verse, and clasped his hands over the second, drew a long breath at the third, as if his oppressed soul was relieved. But Ulphilas, who had drank too much the night before to be a competent interpreter of the utterances of the sacred volume, asked himself with anguish whether the old Bible had not, under the form of some allegory too deep for his intelligence, disclosed to his uncle the secret of his falsehood.

He was aroused from his revery by the appearance of a new visitor in the court. This was Puffo, who had come to arrange for the evening's performance with Christian. Puffo was not a demonstrative person; he did not like the country in winter, and he did not speak a word of Dalecarlian. But still he was in a very good humor just at the present moment, and for sufficient reasons. He bade Ulph good-day, in quite a friendly manner, while the latter was greatly surprised to see him enter the bear-room unceremoniously, as if he was quite at home there.

Puffo found Christian occupied in classifying the mineralogical specimens in his box.

"Well, master, what are you thinking of?" said he. "It's no time now to be playing with those little pebbles; we must get ready for the piece this evening."

"*Parbleu!* I know that very well," replied Christian; "but what could I do without you? It is high time for you to show yourself. Where the devil have you been since yesterday?"

Puffo informed him—but without making any excuses for his absence—that he had finally found a good supper and good bed at the farm, that he had slept late, and having made acquaintance with a servant from the chateau, who was there, had told whom it might concern of the arrival of Christian Waldo at Stollborg. After breakfast the major-domo of the new chateau had sent for him, had talked to him very pleasantly, and

informed him that the exhibition of marionettes would be expected at eight precisely that evening. The major-domo had added :

"You will mention to your employer Christian, that his lordship wishes a very brilliant entertainment, and he begs him to be infinitely witty."

"Excellent!" said Christian. "Plenty of wit, by order of his lordship the baron. Let him take care, lest I prove altogether too witty for him! But, Puffo, did you hear nothing about the baron's illness?"

"Yes, he was ill last night, it appears," replied the stroller, "but he has recovered. Perhaps he was only drunk, though the servants say he does not drink at all. But who's going to believe that a man as rich as he is would cheat his stomach out of good liquor when he has it in his cellar?"

"I wager that you did not cheat yourself, Puffo, out of whatever came under your hand."

"Faith," said Puffo, "thanks to a servant who is in love with a little girl at the farm, and who invited me to eat at his table, I had some very decent brandy. It was corn brandy, rather rough, but it's warming, and I slept capitally after it."

"I am delighted at your windfall, Master Puffo; but we must go to work. Come, go at once and see that Jean has plenty to eat and drink, and then come back and receive your instructions. Hurry!"

Puffo went out, and Christian, not without a sigh, closed his box of minerals, and was opening that which contained the *burattini*, when the noise of sleigh-bells drew him to the window. It was not the doctor of laws returning so soon; it was the pretty blue and silver sleigh which had brought Margaret to Stollborg the evening before.

Must we confess it? Christian had forgotten the promise which that agreeable young lady had made to the apocryphal M. Goefle of repeating her visit next day. The truth is, that he had no longer considered this visit possible, on account of what had happened at the ball, and had consequently said nothing about it to M

Goeffe. Perhaps he regarded the whole adventure as inevitably ended, and perhaps he even wished to have it so; for to what could it lead, unless he should attempt to abuse the inexperience of a child, and so secure her contempt and her curse?

In the meanwhile, the sleigh was approaching; it was now ascending the hill of Stollborg, and Christian could see the pretty head of the young countess, half hidden in her ermine hood. What was to be done? Would he be courageous enough to shut the door in her face, or to send her word by Puffo that the doctor was absent? Pshaw! Ulph would tell her so of his own accord! He had only to keep quiet, and the sleigh would return as it had come. Christian remained at the window, so as to watch it descend the hill, but it did not descend. The door opened, Margaret entered, and the young man had barely time to close hastily the open box where the marionettes were indiscreetly exhibiting their great noses and smiling mouths.

"What, monsieur!" cried the young girl, with an exclamation of surprise, "are you still here? I did not expect that. I hoped that you would be gone."

"Did you meet no one in the court?" said Christian, who was, perhaps, not sorry to throw the blame of this circumstance upon destiny.

"I saw no one," said Margaret; "and, as my visit is secret, I came in very quickly, so that no one should see me. But, once more, Monsieur Goeffe, you ought not to be here. The baron must know, by this time, who it was who ventured to defy him. I give you my word that you ought to go away."

"Go away! You say that very cruelly. But you remind me that I really have gone away already. Yes, yes, be satisfied; I have gone never to return. M. Goeffe has intimated to me that he might be involved in my difficulties, and I have promised him to disappear. You find me in the very act of packing up."

"Oh! Go on, then; do not let me detain you."

"Are you in such great haste never to hear me spoken of again? Very well, imagine that your wish is accom-

plished; that I have already embarked for America at least, and am fleeing under full sail from my terrible enemy, while shedding a few tears at the memory of that first quadrille — the last, too, that I shall ever dance —”

“With me, not with others?”

“Who knows? The I who is speaking to you is a shade, a phantom, a mere reminiscence of what happened yesterday. The other I, about taking his departure, is the sport of the waves and of destiny. I care about him as much as I do for an inhabitant of the moon.”

“Good heavens! how gay you are, Monsieur Goeffe! Do you know I am not so at all?”

“True,” said Christian, struck with Margaret’s sad expression; “I am ashamed to have spoken of myself, when I ought to have been expressing my anxiety about the consequences of the events of last evening. Will you be good enough to answer me, if I venture even now to make inquiries of you?”

“Oh, you are well entitled to do so, since chance has so fully informed you about my affairs already. My aunt reproved me severely last evening, and Mademoiselle Potin had orders to pack my trunks and take me back to Dalby to-day; but this morning everything is changed, and, after a private interview with the baron, who, she says, has quite recovered his health and good spirits, it was decided that I should remain, and should have nothing to do to-day, but to think about my toilet for this evening. By the way, have you heard that Christian Waldo is actually here? They say, indeed, that he is stopping at Stollborg. You must have met him, in that case. How is it — have you seen him?”

“Certainly.”

“Without his mask? Oh, how does he look? Has he really a death’s head?”

“Worse than that. He has a wooden head!”

“Oh no! You are joking.”

“Not in the least! To see him you would swear that his face had been whittled out of a block, with a dull knife. He looks like the ugliest of all his marionettes. Like this one, for instance!”

And Christian pointed to the grotesque physiognomy of a police officer that stuck out of the box, and which Margaret would probably have seen herself if she had not been so preoccupied.

"What, really!" said she, a little apprehensively. "And is that his conjuring-box? Does he occupy this room with you?"

"No; don't be afraid, you will not see him. He has gone out, and he asked as a favor, of M. Goefle, to be allowed to leave his baggage here."

"Poor fellow!" said Margaret, pensively; "and so he is as ugly as that! What stories people tell! Some persons who have seen him insist that he is handsome. And is he old?"

"Somewhere about forty-five. But what are you thinking about, and why are you so sad?"

"I don't know — only I feel sad."

"What — although you are to remain at the chateau, and see the marionettes this evening?"

"Ah! please, Monsieur Goefle, do not treat me quite so much like a child. Last night, at the ball, it is true that I was gay; I enjoyed myself and felt happy, because I thought I had once for all escaped from the baron. But to-day I see very well that my aunt has renewed her hopes, and I must meet again a man whom I shall always sincerely hate from this time forward. Did he not insult me in a cowardly manner yesterday? It is useless for my aunt to say that he was joking. One does not joke with a girl of my age as with a child. I have been trying to cure my wounded pride by persuading myself that he was delirious—that his nervous attack had already begun when he spoke so coarsely to me, and that is what my friends think also. But how do I know what will happen to-day, when I meet him? Whether he is ill-tempered or crazy, who will defend me if he insults me again? You will not be there, and nobody else will dare —"

"What! Nobody dare? But what sort of men have you around you then? And all those brave young fellows whom I saw last evening—"

"Yes, I believe they are brave. But they know nothing of me, and they may imagine I deserve such outrageous treatment from the baron. It is a poor recommendation for me to have been introduced into society by my aunt, since she has the reputation—although most surely it is undeserved—of sacrificing everything to political interests."

"Poor Margaret!" exclaimed Christian, struck by the painful position of this lovely girl.

He was so evidently sincere, and without the least thought of offensive familiarity, that Margaret did not resent his taking her hand; and besides, he dropped it again immediately, as he thought of their relative positions.

"Well," he said, "you must take some resolution or other, at any rate."

"It is taken already. It is only the first step that costs. From this time I will affront the terrible Olaus whenever we meet; I will tell him what I think of him before all the world; I prefer to pass for a perfect demon of malice, rather than for the favorite of this Dalecarlian pasha. And, after all, I shall defend myself better alone; for, if you were present, I should be afraid of having you take my part at your own peril, and that would make me more acquiescent. But I will not forget any more for that, the good counsel you gave me, and the chivalrous way in which you repulsed that frightful baron. I do not know whether we shall ever see each other again, but wherever you are, you will always have my good wishes, and I will pray to God to make you happier than I am."

Christian was extremely touched by the sincere and affectionate manner of this charming girl. He made no display of affected gallantry, but his expressions, and the very sound of his voice, revealed the deepest emotion.

"Kind Margaret!" he said, lifting her pretty hand to his lips. "I swear to you truly that I also will remember you. Ah! why am I not rich and noble? Perhaps then I should have power to help you, and most certainly I would do everything in the world to obtain the happiness of being able to do so. But I am nothing, so I can do nothing."

"But I thank you just as much," replied Margaret. "You seem to me like a brother that I have never known, whom God has sent to me for a moment in the hour of my distress. Let this short meeting be so considered, and we will say good-by, without depending on the future."

Margaret's conduct caused Christian to feel a sense of remorse. M. Guede might reveal at any moment, and it would be impossible for the young women, after having been so much struck with the similarity between the voice of the false uncle and their nephew, not to detect the entire absence of any such resemblance when she should see them together. Besides, it was certain that M. Guede would not lead himself to any such deceit: and it pained Christian to think that Margaret would retain an unchangeable recollection of him. So he confessed the truth of his own secret, acknowledging that he had allowed himself, as he did not know her, to play a joke at her expense, by disguising himself in the doctor's pelisse and top, and pretending to be he. He added that he had deeply repented, upon discovering her angelic nature to me: that he had thus been trifling with. Margaret was a little displeased. She had had an instant's remembrance of the truth, when Christian's voice first fell upon her ear at the hall: but this manner was so perfectly natural when he told her that he had heard everything from the next room, that she had dismissed all doubts from her mind.

"Ah!" she said, "how skillful you are in deceiving, and how easy it is to be duped by your explanations! I cannot be offended at your joke in itself, for I was guilty of an imprudence in coming here, and I was properly punished by a misification. But what I am sorry for is that you should have carried on the deceit so long, with so much assurance and such an appearance of candour."

"Oay with remorse, and a consciousness of guilt. One fault always occasions others, and —"

"And what? What more have you to confess?"

Christian had been on the very point of telling the whole truth. But he paused: for he remembered at that instant that at the name of Christian White Margaret would fly, annoyed and indignant. He therefore resigned

himself to a half sincerity: to the young countess he continued to be Christian Goefle. But this dissimulation, which would have merely amused him with any one else, became extremely irksome when he saw her limpid eyes fixed on him with an expression of fear and reproach.

"I only meant to play with her," he said to himself, "as one child might with another; but now, in spite of all we could do, sentiment has intervened, and the more honorable and delicate it is, the more guilty I feel —"

He became sad in his turn, and Margaret perceived it.

"Come," she said, with a smile all radiant with goodness, "let us not allow any regrets to spoil our romantic meeting. We are about to part, but we do so with our kind feelings towards each other unchanged. You have not abused my confidence by turning me into ridicule; on the contrary, you have helped me to rely upon myself, and to struggle against an unfortunate destiny. Instead of feeling hurt and ridiculous, I feel that I am standing more firmly on my poor feet than I was yesterday at this hour."

"That is true, is it not?" said Christian, warmly; "and I call heaven to witness —"

"Go on," said Margaret.

"I call heaven to witness," he repeated, with enthusiasm, "that I have been influenced by no selfish motive in anything I have done; that my only thought has been to promote your happiness."

"I know it is so, Christian," exclaimed Margaret, rising, and holding out her hand to him; "I know well that in me you have only beheld your poor sister in the sight of God. I thank you for it; and now I must say farewell, for your uncle will be coming back. He does not know me, and it will be quite useless to tell him that I have been here. But you may tell him whatever else you think proper. I am very sure that he will not work against me, and that he is as honorable and generous as yourself."

"But still," said Christian, who saw with regret the end of his romantic adventure rapidly approaching, "you

came to say something to him. Perhaps he ought to know it."

"I came to ask him," said Margaret, with a little hesitation, "to tell me plainly what my aunt's intentions were in case of an open revolt upon my part. But that again was an act of cowardice, I do not require to know. Let her banish me, isolate me, imprison me, strike me — what does it matter? I will not yield, I promise you. I swear to you, I will never marry any man whom I cannot — esteem."

Margaret dared not say love, and Christian was just as powerless to utter that word, but their eyes said it, and their cheeks glowed with a sympathetic blush. After conversing confidentially for an hour, their souls, in that brief glance, spoke to each other, and acknowledged their inward emotion, and yet neither of them was conscious of the fact; Margaret, because she did not know that she loved, and Christian, because he felt certain that he did not. And yet, when Margaret had stepped into her sleigh again, and when Christian could see her no longer, they were both conscious of a sudden pain, as if their hearts had been rent asunder. Tears, that she did not feel, coursed slowly down the young girl's cheeks; while Christian, buried in confused reveries, sighed as deeply as if he had awakened from a dream of sunshine to find himself once more in the frigid winter. In order to watch the sleigh the longer, he went back to the bear-room, and stepped between the two sashes of the window, when a rustling behind him made him turn round, and he beheld a sight that filled him with amazement.

An old man, thin and pale, but with noble features, and carefully dressed in a gray suit of ancient fashion, was standing erect in the midst of the chamber, with a green branch in his hand. Christian had not heard him enter, and the figure, illumined by the declining sun, which, as it neared the west, was sending a red and dusty beam of light through the one long window of the sombre room, seemed a fantastic vision. His expression, moreover, was as singular as his unexpected presence. He seemed undecided; astonished, as it were, to

find himself in that place ; and his small, glassy eyes inspected with amazement the changes which the new guests had made in the previous melancholy arrangements of the room. A moment's reflection satisfied Christian that this strange apparition, instead of being a spectre, was probably old Stenson, come to wait upon M. Goeffe and surprised at not finding him. But what was the meaning of that green branch, and why that timid and disappointed look ?

It was, in fact, old Stenson ; and his sight being as good as his hearing was poor, he had quickly noticed that the fire was burning, the table set, and the clock going. He did not move quickly, however, and Christian had time to draw back behind the folds of an old curtain, nibbled almost to a fringe by the mice, before the old man's eye had reached the open window. From this hiding-place he could watch him without being seen. Stenson's idea was that his nephew, of whose drunken habits he was aware, had, without notifying him, invited some of his boon companions to a Christmas revel in the bear-room. The height of his indignation no one but himself could have expressed. His first care was to put out of sight the traces of such scandalous disorder. He began by scattering all the live coals in the stove, so that the fire should go out of itself ; and then, before either clearing off the table, or going to send the delinquent to do it, he stopped the pendulum of the clock, and put the hands back to four o'clock, where it had stood before the profane hand of Christian had set it going. Next, he turned and looked up, as if to count the candles in the chandelier, but the sun shone in his eyes, and he stepped forward to the window, probably to shut it.

At this moment, Christian, seeing that he was about to be discovered, came forward. But at this apparition, standing in a nimbus of the rays of the setting sun, Stenson, who was probably not the least superstitious member of his family, recoiled to the middle of the floor under the chandelier, with a countenance of such anguish, that Christian, forgetting the old man's deafness, spoke to him kindly and respectfully, with the

intention of reassuring him. But his voice was lost without awakening an echo, in the large and fast chilling room. Stenson fell on his knees before him, stretching out his arms as if to implore his protection or to bless him, and holding out, with a tremulousness that was almost convulsive, the cypress-bough, as one offers a votive palm-bough to some divinity.

"Why, my good man," said Christian, raising his voice, and coming nearer, "I am not God, nor even the Christmas angel that comes in at the window or down the chimney. Get up! I am—"

But he stopped short, for a livid pallor overspread the old man's face, which was already so wan. He perceived that his appearance had thrown Stenson into mortal terror, and drew back to allow him to recover himself. This the old man did in a measure, but only sufficiently to think of escaping. He dragged himself along for a few instants, and then rising up with difficulty, fled through the sleeping chamber, murmuring, as he went, disconnected words, without any distinguishable meaning. Christian, who supposed that he was suffering from some attack of mental disorder, brought on by old age or excessive religious devotion, refrained from following him, for fear of making him worse. There was a small slip of parchment fastened to the branch which the old man had let fall at his feet, and picking it up, he read the following three verses of the Bible, written upon it in a reasonably firm hand:

"Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears."

"Did I not weep for him who was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?"

"A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children, and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just."

Christian had no time to employ his imagination in hunting for answers to this riddle. The day was rapidly drawing to a close. It was only half-past one in the afternoon, and already the transparent shadows of the snowy peaks around were lengthening upon the blue sur

face of the lake. It was a beautiful sight, and, had his affairs permitted, Christian would have loved to gaze upon it. These short northern days have aspects infinitely picturesque; and even at noon they are full of striking effects, as painters say, resulting from the obliquity of the sun's rays, which cover the landscape with strong lights and shades, such as in other countries are only visible at morning and evening. This is probably the reason of the beautiful sunlight which northern travellers are so enthusiastic about. It is not alone the extraordinary landscapes, impetuous waterfalls, immense lakes and splendid auroras of Sweden and Norway, of which they retain such intoxicating recollections; quite as remarkable, they affirm, is the delicious purity of the atmosphere, in which even the most trifling objects assume a brightness and a charm of which nothing anywhere else can give an idea.

But our hero, while he observed the beauty of the heavens, observed also the swift decline of the day, and discerned, afar off, the actual preparations for the very entertainment for which, in fulfilment of his engagement, he was to be in part responsible. The chimneys of the new chateau were sending out thick columns of black smoke, that showed strongly against the evening sky, flecked with rosy and pearl-hued clouds. Gun-shots, repeated by the muffled echoes of the snowy hills, announced that the huntsmen were at work to supply the spits of those Pantagruelian fireplaces. Busy messengers on skates were speeding in all directions, crossing each other's tracks, and occasionally falling headlong upon the ice of the lake. All the country round was being ransacked for everything it could furnish, from the monstrous back-logs that were to adorn the fires in every room of the house, down to the poor little white partridge, which had trusted to his winter's garb to protect it from the sagacious eye of man, and the pitiless scent of the hunting-dog.

The fifth night of the Christmas festivities — for this was December 28th — promised to be a splendid one. Christian alone was not enjoying the prospect; he

was becoming impatient for the return of Puffo. Having resumed his poor devil's suit, pulled his abundant hair over his handsome forehead, and his steeple-crowned hat down over his eyes, he went to hunt up his subordinate in the court, in the *gaard*, and even in the kitchen, where he had so frightened Ulphilas the evening before. It never occurred to him to go down into the cellar. If he had, he would have discovered Puffo, established in the very paradise of his dreams.

He was about returning, when it occurred to him to explore Stenson's little fruit-garden. With a preliminary glance, to be sure that the old overseer whom he had alarmed so much was not there, he descended the steep walk that led down to the edge of the lake. From this point he could see the whole length of the *gaard*, built along the slope that plunged down to the little bay. The old masonry was so well united to the rock, that one could hardly distinguish the natural from the artificial fortification, especially under their clothing of long wall-plants, crystallized by the frost, and hanging down below into the lake, where they were deeply imbedded in the ice. As he stood there, he tried to trace the route he had followed the day before, on his expedition into the secret passage of the bear-room. We promised the reader an account of this expedition, and this is the proper time for it.

It will be remembered that in setting out to hunt up something for supper, he had ventured into a passage hidden by a door very neatly fitted into the wood-work, and leading from under the stairs, which he supposed might conduct to the lodging of M. Stenson. Such was, however, by no means the case. After a few steps along a confined passage, Christian had come to a narrow staircase, steep, and obstructed with rubbish, as if no human foot had ascended it for a long time. At the foot of the staircase, which was very long, he had found an open door. Surprised at this free entrance to a passage apparently itself so mysterious, he was stepping through it, when a gust of wind extinguished his candle, and he was left in darkness. He still advanced cau-

tiously a few steps, when the moon appeared from behind some clouds, and he saw that he was in a sort of cavern, or gallery, opening at intervals upon the lake. The water of the lake penetrated into this gallery, which seemed to be a natural excavation. He followed it for some distance, walking upon the ice the latter part of the way, until he reached, at last, a small wicket, over which he climbed without difficulty, and thus gained admittance first to the fruit-garden, and thence to M. Stenson's *gaard*.

Christian at once recognized this little gate, flanked on either side by two young yew-trees, cut into a sugar-loaf shape; and, with this for a guide, he was able to recognize the principal points of his nocturnal expedition. Although he had no particular expectation of finding Puffo in that quarter, he passed through the fruit-garden, and walked along the lake around the outer cliffs, in the direction of the donjon. He was curious to see by daylight the path along which he had made his way the night before, partly by feeling, and partly by the light of the moon.

He soon came to the entrance of what he had taken for a grotto. It was, in fact, only a deposit of enormous blocks of granite, of that sort termed erratic boulders—that is, blocks isolated from their primitive location, and now lodged where they could not have been originally formed. The position of such boulders is due, it is supposed, to some primeval or modern cataclysm—a vast rush of waters, or the slow transportation of glaciers or icebergs—which has brought them from distant regions to their final resting-place. Those now in question were rounded, like so many enormous pebbles, and their capricious superposition, one above another, seemed to indicate that while whirled along by a tremendous force, they had been suddenly arrested and piled against the mica-schist mass of Stollborg, of which they thus became, as it were, buttresses or outworks. It was difficult to walk among them, on account of the snow, which, during the storm of the night before, had been swept, or rather rolled by the wind

into great drifts or ridges, stretching, like a vast winding-sheet, along the range of boulders.

Christian found his progress so impeded, that he was about to retrace his steps, when he was struck by the picturesque aspect of the donjon towering above him, and withdrew a little to see it to better advantage. He tried, mechanically, to make out the position of the bear-room, and easily recognized it by its one window, about a hundred feet above the level of the lake, and fifty above the summits of the boulders. The cold was not very extreme, and Christian, who always carried a little drawing-book in his pocket, began an outline sketch of the tower, with its lofty escarpment in the rock below, and its chaos of gigantic boulders, which were flung together in such a way as to form—like the sandstone rocks at Fontainebleau—covered passages and galleries, whose effect was extremely fantastic.

While studying this characteristic scene, Christian heard some one singing, at first without paying much attention to the fact. It was a woman's voice, and that of a rustic, true enough in intonation, but veiled, and sometimes tremulous, as of an infirm or aged person. She seemed to be chanting a kind of psalm, and, although monotonous, there was something agreeable in the melancholy air. This sad and quavering melody soothed the mind of the artist as it continued, and brought him into the very mood for understanding and representing the features of a locality with which the voice seemed to be in perfect harmony. The words of the chant were at first indistinct; but as Christian listened mechanically, he gradually recognized them as Swedish, pronounced with the Dalecarlian accent. Their meaning now seemed so strange, that he began to listen more attentively:

"I saw a tower, a square tower by the setting sun. Its gates look to the north. Drops of poison sweat from its openings. It is paved with serpents.

"The tree of the world embraces it; the strong ash-tree shakes. The great serpent bites the waves. The eagle screams; with its pale beak it tears the corpses. The ship of the dead is launched.

"Where are the Ases and the Alfes? They sigh by the entrance of the caves. The sun begins to be darkened; all things perish.

"But earth, green and beautiful, begins to brighten again from the east; the waters awake, the cascades flow.

"I saw a palace fairer than the sun upon the top of Gimli—I see it no more. The Vala falls again into the night."

In these sombre poetical fragments Christian gradually recognized verses, arranged or repeated at random, from the antique poem called the *Voluspa*. This, considering the rustic pronunciation of the singer, he thought very extraordinary. Could it be that the peasants in that country had preserved a tradition of the sacred chants of the Scandinavian mythology? This seemed hardly probable, and yet who could have taught them to this woman? Christian, who, as a traveller, was curious on all subjects, resolved to find and cross-examine the singer, as soon as he had finished his sketch; but when he returned his album to his pocket a few moments afterwards, the voice had ceased. He looked all about, but could see no one. Supposing that she must be concealed behind the boulders, he proceeded to explore them, and found this not much easier than walking in the deep margin of the snow-drift outside. Within the expanse of the principal cavern, which followed the turns of the rock for some fifty steps, there was no footing except on a floor of ice, very slippery and wavy on the surface, as if the rippling water had been instantaneously frozen on some cold autumn night.

However, our adventurer succeeded in discovering the traces of his own steps, made the night before, when he imagined he was walking over fragments of bricks and tiles; and soon he found, also, the mysterious door, by which he had issued from the donjon. It was now fastened with two strong iron staples and a padlock, the key of which had been carried off. This must have been just done; the singer was undoubtedly some dependent, like Stenson and Ulphilas, who was employed about the old manor. She could not be far off, for he had heard her singing scarcely five minutes before, and she must have

been behind the boulders, for Christian could see over the lake in all directions, and from top to bottom of the cliffs at the base of the tower, and no one was visible. He now retraced his steps to leave the grotto, which, as it was only lighted by a natural opening in about the middle of its whole extent, was rather dark. Pausing for a moment under this natural opening, to look at the sky, he saw, between himself and the heavens, an object projecting over the rock from the smooth and naked flank of the donjon. This he quickly recognized as the under-side of the stone balcony that supported the double window of the bear-room, and which was so situated that any one, with a cord or ladder, might easily descend through the space between the rocks below, when he would at once find himself under cover in the vault which they formed just at this place.

Christian, always inclined to be romantic, immediately thought out a plan of escape to be adopted in case of siege or captivity in Stollborg. He scaled the irregular rocks that formed the sides of the grotto, and, with a good deal of exertion, climbed out through the opening which, he was satisfied, had not been made by the hand of man. This examination led him to reflect, as we have all had occasion to do at least once in our lives, that even in the most desperate situations chances occasionally occur so improbable that they seem to belong, not to real life, but to the world of the imagination. However, still bent upon pursuing the singer, he continued his examination amongst the boulders, between almost any two of which there was room for penetrating. Finding no one, he was just giving up the chase, when he heard the voice again, coming this time from much lower down than he had supposed it to be when he heard it in the first place. He went towards it, but as he approached the spot where he thought the mysterious rhapsodist must be stationed, the chant, which had suddenly ceased, like that of the cicada on the approach of man, was heard once more in another direction, and from much higher up, as if floating in the air above him. Raising his head, Christian now perceived, in the side of the

donjon, a long fissure, half hidden by ivy, and extending almost vertically, from a window in the upper story, a good deal to the right of the window in the bear-room, down to a ruinous part of the wall, below which were some other masses of rock.

He even thought that he could see pieces of stone falling along this fissure, as if some person had just made their way into it; but, on approaching as near as he could, it seemed to him quite inaccessible, and he went further on.

And now the voice once more began its plaintive chant, and Christian — amused at first, but finally with a feeling of irritation — followed the singer from one place to another in the little chaos of granite rocks. He was constantly disappointed, until he really began to be somewhat startled. These savage verses, fragments of a gloomy apocalypse, disconnected and wild, as if inspired by delirium, had something frightful in them, when heard in that gloomy place, at that melancholy evening hour. Christian thought involuntarily of the water-witches who are the centre of all the legends of Sweden, and indeed of all popular beliefs throughout the north of Europe.

At last he persuaded himself that the voice must come from the tower itself. Perhaps some captive was hidden there in a secret dungeon. He called aloud three times, using at a venture the mythological name of Vala, that is Sibyl, which the singer, in her chant, had seemed to wish to appropriate. At this the voice became silent again, as if in confirmation of the superstitious belief of the country, that whenever you succeed in calling one of the malevolent or melancholy spirits who dwell among the mountains by its name, it is either frightened or consoled, and in either case is reduced to silence.

But still another thought haunted Christian, as he finally turned to go back to the tower by an outside path. He could not help asking himself whether one of the victims of the mysterious Baron Olaus, crazed with suffering, was not lamenting in a dungeon under his feet. However, he forgot all about this fantastic idea, when he found M. Goeffe seated at table in the bear-room.

"Well," said the lawyer, without troubling himself to rise, "you came near bringing me into a pretty scrape with your prank last evening. The baron, strange to say, did not mention a word about it; but the Countess Elveda absolutely would not believe me when I protested and swore that I had neither a nephew nor a natural child."

"What, M. Goeffe! did you disown a son who has done you so much honor?"

"I did indeed; it would have been quite impracticable for me to keep up the joke, or to assume the responsibility of such a mystification! Do you know that you did not escape observation by any means? Quite independently of the scene with your host, everybody seems to have been struck by your style and graces, the ladies especially. In the countess's room I met five or six of the more fashionable ladies of the province, who were quite infatuated about you; and when I swore upon my honor that I had nothing whatever to do with this unknown, you should have heard their suppositions and commentaries! Some of them were inclined to suggest that it might have been Christian Waldo, of whom so many adventurous stories are told; but the prevailing opinion was that you were the prince royal, travelling incognito about his future kingdom."

"Prince Henry, who is now at Paris?"

"Yes; and this served capitally to account for the baron's nervous attack, for he detests the prince, and would naturally have been agitated on meeting him, by the conflict between his hate and resentment on the one hand, and the respect due to the future heir of the throne on the other."

"But the Countess Elveda cannot have been deceived by such a silly idea as that?"

"Oh no, certainly not, she knows the prince too well; but she is extremely fond of quizzing, and she amused herself by pretending to these ladies that you were so much like our future monarch, that she did not know what to think. Only, as I was going out, she took me aside and said: 'You are severe, my friend, in disown-

ing this imprudent young man. For my own part, I thought him very agreeable, and if he does not resemble you in features, he takes after you at least in his wit and distinguished manners.' ”

“Why, Monsieur Goeffe, that is very flattering to me. But then she persists in believing me your son?”

“Without doubt; and the more I protested to the contrary, the more she laughed, and insisted that it was impossible for me to disown you, since you had so publicly presented yourself in society under my name. ‘The wine is drawn,’ she said, ‘and you must drink it. He is a roguish fellow, and is trying to plague you. It is a just punishment of the follies of our youth, to become the parents of ‘such terrible children!’ Please to observe the stain which you have brought upon my reputation! At last, to rid myself of you, I said that whether son or nephew, you had gone away; that I had packed you off in disgrace for having been disrespectful to his lordship the baron.”

“Very right, Monsieur Goeffe: you did quite right; for, as to the baron, I don’t know whether I am dreaming, but I am really beginning to consider him almost as much of a Blue-Beard as the reports about him represent. I should have found out all about it, if I had had more time.”

“Ah! ah! really? Well, you must tell me all about it; but, in the meanwhile, have something to eat. It is after two o’clock, and you must be almost dead with hunger.”

“I? No, not at all. It seems to me as if I had just got up from table. Were we not eating until almost noon?”

“Well, but don’t you know that in such a cold climate as this you need to eat every two hours? I have just had coffee at the new chateau; this is dinner, now; at four, we will have coffee together; at six we will have the *afterward*; that is, we will take some bread and butter and cheese, while waiting for supper.”

“Good heavens! how you keep at it! I knew perfectly well that that was the regimen of the fat burghers

at Stockholm; but you, M. Goeffe, who are so slender still!"

"Well, do you want me to become a skeleton? I should very quickly, if I should vary from our customs. Believe me, you had better conform to them, or you will very soon be ill."

"To enable me to obey you, M. Goeffe, I need two things: time, and my assistant Puffo. Now, time is flying; and Puffo only appeared to me a moment, and then disappeared, perhaps not to return until to-morrow morning."

"But could I not help you myself? What is to be done?"

"A good many things; but most of all, to decide upon our piece and run it over together, so that that animal, Puffo, may be ready to represent with me. He has a sufficiently good memory, if he can have one rehearsal before the performance; but now, as we have been travelling some days without doing anything, and as he is probably drunk to night already—"

"Come, come! You have five hours before you—an immense quantity of time! More than I have needed, sometimes, to prepare a cause a great deal more complicated than your comedies of marionettes! I promise to help you, I tell you, but on condition that you will sit down and eat with me, for I don't know anything more uncomfortable than to eat alone."

"You will permit me to be pretty quick, then, won't you?" said Christian, taking a seat opposite the lawyer, "and not to talk too much, for I shall need all my lungs this evening."

"Very well, very well," replied M. Goeffe, cutting off for Christian an enormous piece of cold veal—a dish greatly esteemed by the middle classes in Sweden, when properly cooked; "but what were you saying to me just after you came in? What was it you would have discovered, if you had had a little more time?"

Christian related his adventure, and at the close of his story asked M. Goeffe if he supposed the lower part of Stollborg contained any old prison.

"Upon my word I don't know anything about it," replied the advocate. "It is very possible that there may be some kind of cell in the great mass of masonry here under our feet, and if so, I have no doubt that it has been used as a prison. Our ancestors were not persons of very refined manners, and even yet our nobility have justiciary rights on their own domains."

"And do you think it equally probable that this substructure of the donjon may be serving as a prison now?"

"Who knows? What are you thinking of?"

"That possibly some person may be wickedly buried there, a still living victim of one of the thousand dark and secret crimes attributed to the vengeful baron."

"Really, it would be strange enough to discover that!" said the lawyer, who had suddenly become thoughtful. "Are you sure you were not dreaming when you thought you heard the voice and strange songs?"

"Sure! how can you ask?"

"There is no knowing; you said yourself a little while ago that people are sometimes subject to hallucinations. Now the ear, as well as the eye, may become the medium of the illusion; and you ought to be aware — to be properly on your guard — to what an extent hallucinations prevail in Sweden, especially towards the north, where really, with two-thirds of the population, they are a sort of chronic condition."

"Yes, I know that such visions become contagious when reinforced by superstition; but I beg you to believe that I have no faith in the witches or evil spirits of either lakes, torrents, or old castles, and that I could not be influenced, therefore, in any such way."

"Nor I, assuredly. And yet — Well, Christian, there must be, independently of superstition, something inexplicable in the effects produced by the natural scenery and conditions of the north upon vivid imaginations. It is in the air; in the singular sounds that go ringing along the ice; in the mists, full of mysterious forms; in the marvellous mirage of our lakes, called the *hagring*, an extraordinary phenomenon which you must have heard of, and which you may see at any moment. Possibly

something of it may result from physical disorders in the circulation of the blood, induced by constantly passing out of the icy atmosphere into the over-heated air of our rooms, and the contrary. Anyhow, it is a fact that we find the most reasonable people, those in the most perfect health, the least credulous, even such as have passed the greater portion of their lives free from illusions, all at once becoming subject to them. Even I myself — ”

“ Go on, I beg you, M. Goefle — at least unless the subject is too painful ; you are as white as your napkin.”

“ I do really feel quite unwell. I have felt so two or three times to-day. What a poor machine is man ! Anything that his reason cannot explain either frightens him or annoys him. Pour me out a good glass of port, Christian. Your health ! I am glad, on the whole, that I declined the invitation to dine over yonder ; I like better to be here with you in this gloomy room, that I can laugh at, after all — Well, as you are eating without being hungry to please me, and are listening to me in spite of your own business matters, I will tell you about my hallucination ; it is at least as singular as yours :

“ It was no longer ago than last evening, and in this very place where we now are. I was in the other room, quite absorbed in investigating a very interesting legal matter, while my little valet, after making me a good deal of trouble, at last condescended to go to sleep. I had intended to stay with him, by a great effort of patience, for a quarter of an hour or so ; not more, for I was hungry, though I did not know that food had been brought. However, the demon of study, who has the art of making every pursuit interesting, even that of the law, took possession of me so completely, that I forgot everything, until my poor stomach was obliged fairly to shout into my ears that it was eleven o'clock at night.

“ Well, I looked at my watch, and sure enough it was eleven o'clock. The truth is, that my housekeeper is in the habit of looking after me, and calling me to my meals, and I had quite forgotten that in this den of a place, left to the care of that lunatic of an Ulphilas, I should not be notified of anything whatever. Nils, as I told you, is a

servant whom Gertrude selected for me, so as to teach me the duties of the valet-de-chambre. Well, as I had fasted for full seven long hours, I got up at once, took the light and came into this room, where I found the dishes that you had brought on the table; I gave Ulphilas the credit of this rather late hospitality, and set about satisfying my appetite probably rather voraciously.

"You know already, my dear Christian, that this old ruin has the reputation of being haunted by the devil. At least, this is the opinion of the orthodox portion of the community, who account for the circumstance by affirming that it was used, not long ago, as a chapel by a Catholic lady, the Baroness Hilda, widow of Adelstan, the elder brother —"

"Of Baron Olaus de Waldemora," said Christian, "but have the Dalecarlians such a horror of Catholicism as that?"

"They abominate it," said M. Goeffe, "as much as they did the reformed religion before the time of Gustavus Vasa. They are a race who neither love nor hate by halves. As to this demon who haunts Stollborg, old Stenson does not believe in it, but he does thoroughly believe in the *Gray Lady*; who, he says, is nothing else than the spirit of the late baroness, who died in this room more than twenty years ago.

"An hour before, I had been laughing at apparitions, to reassure my little serving-lad; but you know how it is with dreams. Very often some careless word heard or spoken in the course of the day, and forgotten the next moment, proves to be the seed from which they blossom mysteriously, and without our own consciousness; and so we bear them in our minds until night, when, as soon as our eyes are shut and our reason is asleep, they rise up before our deluded vision in fantastic forms, endowed now with tenfold their real significance, and, perhaps, horror.

"It must be, it seems to me, that hallucinations — that is, waking dreams — obey exactly the same law. I had ended my supper, and was about lighting my pipe, when suddenly there swept through the room a shrill, melancholy sound, like that of the wind when it rushes

through a door suddenly opened ; the air was at the same time stirred and chilled, and the flames of the candles that stood upon the table flickered. At the moment, I happened to be looking towards the door of the vestibule, and seeing that this was firmly fastened and motionless, I supposed that Nils had awaked, and had opened the opposite door, that of the guard-room.

“ ‘ Ah ! ’ I cried, as I got up, ‘ there you are again ! Do go to sleep, will you, you cursed little coward ! ’ ”

“ I stepped to the door, thinking that the little rascal had not ventured to open it wide, but had only set it ajar, to be sure I had not gone away. But this door was shut as tight as the other.

“ Had the child closed it again when he saw that I was there, and had the slight sound he must have made escaped me, while I was looking for my pipe and refilling the stove ? ” It was possible. I went into the guard-room, but Nils was fast asleep, with his little fists clenched. Evidently he had not stirred. I covered up the fire in the chimney, for fear of some accident, and came back into this room, where everything was still. The melancholy whistling was not repeated. I concluded that a gust of wind had come in through some open joint somewhere in the wood-work, and resumed my pipe, and the papers which I was examining for the baron.

“ This business was a rather intricate and subtle law question, and was quite interesting to me, but I need not trouble you with it. All I need say is, that it involved a certain contract for the sale of property executed some time ago by Baron Adelstan ; and that his name, as well as that of his wife Hilda de Blixen, were repeated in almost every sentence of the instrument. The names of this married couple, both of whom died in the flower of their age, one in a tragical and mysterious manner, and the other in this very room, and probably in that same unfurnished and dilapidated old bed in the opposite corner, may have made some impression upon my mind, of which I was not conscious. I was quite absorbed in my examination, and the fire in the stove was roaring well, when I thought I heard a creaking on the staircase, several times repeated.

I was quite startled, and at the same time was so ashamed of my own emotion, that I would not even turn my head round to see what it was. It was not surprising that the damp old wood-work was beginning to feel the effects of the hot fire in the stove, and that it should occasionally emit these unaccustomed sounds.

"I went on with my reading again; but now, the creaking of the steps and the balustrade was followed by a different sound, not unlike the rasping of an iron tool on the wall, guided by a hand so feeble and uncertain, that it might easily have been mistaken, at moments, for the scratching of a rat among those old maps. I looked up, but seeing nothing, kept on with my work, for I would not permit myself to be disturbed by these unaccountable noises, peculiar to all such old rooms, and which are always occasioned in the simplest manner. It is silly to be searching for the causes of such things, when one has more important business to attend to.

"However, a third and still a different sound compelled me to turn round again, and look once more at the staircase. I could hear the large parchment map, that covers the built-up door, shaking and crackling in a singular manner. I saw it rise up repeatedly; it shook upon the rings by which it hangs, and stood out, as if some body, not unlike a human form, was moving behind it. For the moment, I was startled in good earnest. It was possible that some thief had managed to secrete himself there, and was waiting for an opportunity to spring out upon me. I jumped up hastily to take my sword from the chair, where I had laid it when I came in, but it was not there."

"For a sufficient reason, I regret to say," observed Christian. "It was at my side."

"I do not know," resumed M. Goeffe, "whether I concluded that Ulphilas, with unusual neatness and solicitude, had put away the weapon. The truth is that I had not looked in my portmanteau, and had not been at all uneasy at not finding my clothes, which I had hung upon the back of the arm-chair. I am not in the habit of attending to such matters myself, and most probably

had entirely forgotten having placed them there. Not seeing the sword, I had time to collect myself a little, and to make up my mind that I was unnecessarily alarmed. Nobody could want to kill me, and if a robber had taken a fancy to my purse, the wisest course would be to let him have the small amount it contained without resistance.

"So I returned, and advanced towards the stairs, quite coolly and resolutely, I give you my word. And exactly at this moment it was that the hallucination took place. There, stay a moment, Christian! Look at that portrait; to the right of the window."

"I have already tried to see it," said Christian, "but the light is so bad where it hangs, and the flies or the damp have defaced it so much, that I could hardly make it out at all."

"Well, then, take a light and look at it. It is getting dark, at any rate, and will soon be time to light up."

Christian lit the three-branched candlestick that had been left on the table, stood up on a chair, and with the help of his album, which he held between his eyes and the flickering lights, proceeded to examine the picture carefully.

"I see it very indistinctly still," he said. "It is a portrait of a rather tall woman, elegantly formed; she is seated, and wears a black veil, as is the custom with Swedish ladies in winter, to protect their eyes from the glare of the snow. I can see her hands, which are very well painted, and very beautiful. Ah! ah! the dress is pearl-gray satin, with bows of black velvet. Is it the portrait of the Gray Lady?"

"Exactly. It is the Baroness Hilda."

"Let me see the face, then. There, I catch it now; it is handsome—an agreeable and sweet countenance. Stay, wait a moment, M. Goefle! That face inspires me with a feeling of sympathy; it moves me."

"So you don't care to listen to my story any longer?"

"That's all;—yes, indeed I do. I am pressed for time, and yet your adventure interests me so much that I must hear the end of it. I'm ready."

"Well, then," continued the lawyer, "as my eyes again fell upon that great map of Sweden which is now so still, a human figure came out from under it, lifting it aside as one does a tapestry curtain. It was the figure of a tall and thin woman, not slender and beautiful, as the original of the portrait must have been, but livid and wasted, as if she had just risen from the tomb; and the gray dress, too, soiled, worn, and with the black ribbons unfastened and hanging loose, seemed to be trailing with it the very earth of the grave. My dear friend, so horrible, so frightful was this painful vision, that I closed my eyes to avoid seeing it. When I opened them again—but whether in a moment or in a second, I cannot say, for I took no account of time—the figure was standing upon the floor directly before me. She had descended the stairs—I had heard them creaking again—and was staring at me with haggard eyes, and with a fixity that I can only call cadaverous; so totally was it devoid of thought, interest, or even life. It was really a corpse standing upright there within two steps of me! As for me, I remained motionless, like one fascinated—a very ugly-looking object myself, probably—and with my hair standing up on my head, for what I know—"

"Upon my word," said Christian, "a disagreeable apparition enough! I believe if I had been in your place, I should certainly have sworn, or broken something! Did this last long?"

"I don't know; it seemed to me that it would never end. I shut my eyes again to lose sight of it; and when I reopened them, the spectre was moving towards the side of the bed. I can scarcely describe its further movements. It seemed as if it were opening the curtains, and bending down to speak to some being whom it saw there—invisible save to those ghastly eyes. Then it turned as if to open the window; though it did not really open it. And finally, it returned towards me. By this time I had somewhat recovered myself, and tried to make a deliberate examination of the face; but this was more than I could do. I could see nothing but

those great dead eyes — it seemed as if I were powerless to remove my own from them. Besides, the phantom now passed me quickly. If it noticed me at all, it did not seem irritated or disturbed by my presence. It flitted uncertainly along the room; tried to return to the stairs, and appeared unable to find them. Then the fleshless hands began to feel along the walls, and suddenly it disappeared. Again a rush of wind ran whistling through the room, and rang in my ears; it ceased, and as, during the whole of this experience, I had been perfectly conscious of being in my right mind, I perceived at once the cessation of the unaccustomed sounds, together with the disappearance of the fantastic image.

“I felt of myself — there was no doubt as to my identity. I pinched my hand, and felt it perfectly. I looked at the bottle of rum, but I had hardly made a beginning upon it. Evidently I was neither in a trance nor intoxicated. Indeed, I no longer felt even an emotion of terror, and very coolly said to myself that I must have been asleep standing. I finished my pipe while reflecting upon the affair, and even indulged my imagination so far as to half wish to undergo another such hallucination, so that I might try to overcome it; but the phenomenon was not repeated, and I went very quietly to bed. It was some time before I fell asleep, but I experienced no other inconvenience.”

“But then,” said Christian, “what should have made you so uncomfortable just now, when you were only thinking the matter over?”

“Why, because the mind is so constituted, I suppose. There are emotional reactions. By hearing of delusions, you may become a little deluded yourself. Twice already, to-day, I have recalled stories of this kind, that are certainly either fables or dreams, and yet which embody great and mysterious moral truths.”

“How is that, M. Goefle?”

“Good heavens! it happened to my own father, who, like myself, was an advocate and professor of law, to see the ghost of a man who had been unjustly condemned to death more than ten years before, and who called upon

him for justice to his despoiled children, and for the rehabilitation of his own memory. He saw this spectre at the foot of a gibbet which he was passing. He looked into the affair, found that the phantom had told the truth, instituted proceedings, and gained his cause. Doubtless the ghost was an illusion, but it was an appeal to my father's conscience. Now, whence came that appeal? From the grave? Certainly not. From heaven? Who knows?"

"Well, M. Goeffe, what do you conclude as to the apparition of last night?"

"Nothing at all, my dear friend, but I am none the less troubled, every little while, with the idea that the Baroness Illda may perhaps have been the victim of a calumny, and that God has given permission, not that her soul should visit me, but that my own mind should be so strongly impressed with the recollection of her, as to bring her image before my eyes, and thus influence me to make researches into the truth of the matter."

"But what was the charge brought against this famous baroness, then?"

"That she fabricated an audacious falsehood, with the design of depriving Baron Olaus of his rightful inheritance."

"Will you please tell me that story, too, M. Goeffe? I feel extremely curious about it, since you have seen this spectre."

"Certainly, I intended to do so; and, fortunately, it is not long.

"Baron Magnus de Waldemora, who was commonly called 'the great iarl' (though 'iarl' means properly 'count,' the term is very commonly applied to all nobles of a certain rank and importance), had two sons. The elder, Adelstan, was quick, impetuous, and ardent in disposition, while the younger, Olaus, at present sur-named the Snow Man, was mild, affectionate, and studious. They were both tall, handsome, and strong, and together were their father's pride. His fortune was considerable — an unusual advantage in our country, where the wealth of the nobility was immensely diminished by the reduction of 1680. The right of primogeniture does

not prevail with us, but all the sons inherit equally. Still, even half of this inheritance was, it might seem, enough to satisfy either of the brothers, and if there was ever a young man who appeared incapable of jealousy it was Olaus — a youth of calm exterior, inclined to quiet raillery, for whom the father seemed to feel a sort of preference, and who was generally more liked than his elder brother.

“The latter was of a noble character, but his frankness was so great as sometimes to verge upon rudeness. He had early shown an active disposition, and had a passion for travelling and novelty. At thirty he had already been all over Europe, and, during his stay in France, had acquired certain philosophical views, which caused great apprehensions to the elder members of his family, and even to his father. His friends wished him to marry, and he agreed to do so, requiring only that his bride should be the choice of his heart. Accordingly he married a beautiful young lady whom he had known in France, the Countess Hilda de Blixen, an orphan of a noble Danish family, who had no other dowry than her mental attractions, her beauty, and her virtue. This was a great deal, you would say, and I am entirely of your opinion. It was also that of the old Baron Magnus, who, although at first disposed to disapprove of the connection as a mere love-match, soon learned to love and cherish his daughter-in-law.

“Some assert that Olaus was disappointed at this reconciliation, and that he had tried to make a quarrel between his father and Adelstan. It has been hinted, moreover, that Baron Magnus, who was a strong and healthy man, died in a very sudden manner. Both these charges are of old date, and absolutely without any proof.

“What is certain, however, is, that from the time of sharing the inheritance there existed a serious misunderstanding between the two brothers. My father himself was present during a certain discussion about the property, when Baron Adelstan spoke in the bitterest manner to Olaus, who had reproached him mildly for having lived so much at a distance from his family, neglecting his

home duties and responsibilities, in order to gratify his taste for travelling.

“ ‘My father,’ he said, ‘never knew the value of your hypocritical affection. Perhaps he understands it only too well, now that he is in his grave!’ ”

“The bitterness of this sarcasm, and the moderation with which Olaus received it, caused my father to express great disapproval of the frightful suspicion which the elder brother hinted. Adelstan said no more, but he never intimated that he had changed his opinion. Many utterances of his to the same effect are remembered, whose implications have remained without proof, but—at least as far as some persons about him are concerned—not without weight.

“Baron Magnus had not laid aside any such sums of money as would admit of the purchase by one brother from the other of either portion of the real estate, and the question of selling the lands and the chateau therefore came up. Olaus refused the income which his brother offered to settle upon him, notwithstanding that the amount was larger than he himself offered to Adelstan in case the lands should be adjudged to him. The plan of selling had, however, to be given up, for no purchasers came forward. This immense chateau, situated in a remote region on the confines of a wilderness, was no longer adapted to the requirements of modern society, whose tendency is to draw people to the capital, or southern provinces. My father, however, succeeded in making a clear statement of the whole revenues and expenses of the estate, and on this basis he fixed upon a proper figure for the annuity to be paid to the one brother, by whichever should continue in possession of the domain, and it was agreed to cast lots for the choice. The result was in favor of the elder brother.

“Olaus showed no vexation, but it is asserted that he was, in fact, extremely chagrined, and that he lamented to those in his confidence the unjust fate which drove away from the heritage of his fathers a person like himself, accustomed to a country life, and fond of quiet, in order to bestow this beautiful residence upon an incon-

stant and restless being like Adelstan. By such complaints, by the friendly familiarity of his manners, and by liberal gifts bestowed upon the numerous retainers of the house, he formed for himself a party of adherents who soon threatened to impede the elder brother in managing his affairs, and even in maintaining his domestic authority.

“My father, who was obliged to remain here some weeks, while concluding the settlement of the estate, perceived all this, but he had grown weary of these constant family dissensions, and probably he did less than justice to the frank and loyal character of the elder brother. He seems to have been very much influenced by the plausible manners and apparent goodness of heart of Olaus, and, except where questions of equity were concerned, in which case my father was rigorously impartial, the younger brother was his favorite. My father went away after having endeavored to arrange for the residence of both brothers at the chateau. Olaus was anxious to retain at least a foothold at Stollborg, but Adelstan refused to allow him this privilege, with a firmness that seemed somewhat harsh.

“As soon as Olaus left for Stockholm, where he proposed to establish himself, Adelstan sent for his wife, who, during these discussions about the property, had been residing with a friend at Falun, together with her young son, then only a few months old, and the young couple went to housekeeping at Waldemora. And now it was, after many suspicions and much gossiping talk, that a secret was discovered — or so it was stated — which the young people had hitherto concealed from the public. Baroness Hilda was said to be a Catholic. She had been brought up in France, and there — according to the stories in circulation — in compliance with the wishes of an aunt and the circle of her friends, had imprudently devoted herself to theological studies, and had been led away by the pride of knowledge to abjure the religion of her fathers, which she was taught to believe was of too recent date. It was even said that false miracles had been employed, so as to extort from her imprudent vows. On these points I can give you no

information of any kind. I might have been acquainted with the baroness, but no opportunity occurred of bringing us together, and we never met. She is said to have been very intelligent, and thoroughly educated. It is quite possible that she may have changed her religion from conscientious motives and intellectual conviction; and, for my part, I acquit her on this charge with a great deal of philosophy. Unfortunately, the public could not be brought to do this. In Sweden, there is a very strong attachment to the established religion, and the dissenters are so few that they are at once marked out from the rest of the community. They are frequently rebuked, and even persecuted; not so cruelly as in less enlightened times, but with sufficient harshness to render their lives painful and miserable. The law even admits of their being exiled.

"A terrific scandal therefore arose, when it was discovered, or was supposed to be so, that the baroness, who had always been rather lax in her attendance at the parish church, had secretly erected a chapel to the Virgin Mary in this very old donjon; where, unable to command the services of a priest of her religion, she was in the habit of offering up special and private prayers of her own. This secret worship the peasants regarded as little better than sorcery. However, as the baroness did not attempt to make proselytes, and never spoke of her religion, the matter was gradually hushed up. She did a great deal of good, and her lovely character overcame many prejudices.

"The young couple had now been established at Waldemora for about three years, with their one son, whom they idolized. The sweet temper of the baroness had modified the slight harshness of her husband's disposition, which arose from his uncompromising independence and integrity of character. They were beloved and appreciated; and both the retainers of the family and the neighbors were beginning to forget all about Olaus, notwithstanding the letters that he frequently wrote, so as to have the pleasure of signing himself 'The poor exile!' Pastor Mickelson, the minister of

the parish, whose church you probably saw about half a league from here, was Olaus's most faithful adherent. Olaus had always made a great display of piety; while Adelstan's toleration was excessively vexatious to the pastor, who was somewhat fanatical in his Lutheranism. The baron, moreover, had exerted his influence to have a certain ceremony of the divine service discontinued: namely, the employment of a certain staff which the beadle used in his official duty of awakening those who fell asleep during the sermon. The question was brought before the bishop, who decided upon a compromise; the beadle was to be allowed to tickle the noses of the sleepers with a switch, but not to rap them over the head with the stick. The pastor never forgave Baron Adelstan for this assault upon his authority, and still less the young baroness, who was said to have laughed at this Dalecarlian method of enforcing devotion by blows with a staff. He never ceased annoying the young iarl and his wife, and was always stirring up against them the country people; themselves very prone to religious intolerance.

"In the meanwhile, the young couple persevered in trying to promote improvements on their estate. The baron was severe in dealing with abuses, and drove off without pity all persons of disreputable character; he also put an end to the shameful practice of inflicting stripes on servants, and to the humiliating relics of the past serfage of the country people. The Dalecarlian peasant is usually well disposed, but he is as far as possible from being a friend of progress. Many of them were loath to part with the old abuses, and found it difficult to reconcile themselves to asserting their personal dignity.

"One day — truly a most unhappy day — the baron was obliged to go to Stockholm on business; and as it was the time of the autumn rains, which made travelling difficult, and often impracticable, he was obliged to leave his wife behind at the chateau. As he was returning to his home in about a fortnight from this time, Baron Adelstan was assassinated in the gorges of Falun.

He had travelled on horseback ; and, in his impatience to see his beloved Hilda, had ridden on in advance, leaving his people to finish a meal which seemed to him rather too protracted. He was then thirty-three years old, and his widow twenty-four.

“This murder made a great excitement, and astounded the whole country. In many districts the Dalecarlians are fierce and passionate, and among these mountains the Norwegian duel, with knives, is still in vogue, but such a thing as a cowardly and secret assassination is almost unexampled. The people in the vicinity did not venture to accuse any one, and indeed they had no grounds for doing so. Certain foreign miners disappeared suddenly from Falun, but they could not be traced. Baron Adelstan had not been robbed, and there was but one person in the world for whose interest it was to get rid of him. Some whispered cautiously the name of Baron Olaus ; but the majority rejected such a suspicion with horror, and my father first of all.

“Baron Olaus appeared overwhelmed with despair at his brother’s death. He hastened into the country, weeping and lamenting rather too ostentatiously, perhaps, and testifying the most disinterested devotion to his sister-in-law. Every one was very much edified by his conduct, except the baroness herself, who received him with extreme coldness, and, after several hours, requested him to leave her alone with her grief ; for which she could not be consoled. The baron accordingly left, to the great regret of the retainers of the family, whom he had quite overpowered with gifts and kindness. On the very evening of his departure, little Harold, the son of the baroness, was taken with convulsions, and died before morning.

“Driven quite to despair by this final blow, the unhappy mother lost all prudence, and loudly accused Olaus of having first caused the assassination of her husband, and then of poisoning her child, so as to get possession of their fortune. But her cries were unanswered—they did not even reach the outer world. There was no skilful physician within reach, to verify

the nature of the child's death, and none of her domestics chose to run the risk of seeking for proofs against Baron Olaus. Pastor Mickelson, who practised as a physician in his parish, declared that Harold had died as children often do, from the effects of teething, and that the poor baroness was unjust and insane; which, unfortunately, was very possible.

"Baron Olaus had not gone far when word reached him of his nephew's death; upon which he at once returned, apparently as full of grief as the baroness herself. She, however, overwhelmed him with maledictions, to which he only replied by sad and heart-rending smiles. Every one lamented her misfortunes; as a widow, a mother, even as an insane person, she was a worthy object of compassion; but no one thought of accusing the generous, the patient, the sensible Olaus. Perhaps he was thought even more to be pitied than she, as being doomed to endure suspicions so outrageous. He was admired, moreover, for not allowing himself to be irritated; his very complaints were uttered in a tone full of tenderness, and he begged Hilda to continue to reside at the chateau, and to live with him as a sister with a brother. For my part, I am quite convinced that the baron is a great knave, and that he did not regret his nephew's death, and yet I am far from considering him an actual monster; he has never seemed to me to be a man of sufficient boldness to commit great crimes. The baroness had suffered too much, and was in a state of too much mental excitement to be able to judge coolly. She charged him with having killed father, brother, and nephew; and all at once she formed a singular resolution, which I think was an act of vengeance and despair, and altogether an ill-judged measure.

"She called together the magistrates and civic authorities of the province, and declared to them, in presence of all her own household, that she was pregnant, and that she intended to maintain all the hereditary rights of the child whose natural guardian she was. She made this declaration with great energy, and announced that she should proceed to Stockholm, in order to have her condi-

tion fully authenticated, and to ascertain her legal rights until the birth of her child.

“Baron Olaus listened to this declaration with great calmness, and replied, in substance, thus :

“ ‘It is perfectly unnecessary to expose yourself to the fatigues and risks of this journey. The hope that my dear brother’s lineage will be revived fills me with satisfaction, nor will I consent to a renewal of any controversies. It is evident that my presence annoys and irritates you, and never shall it be said that the disturbed state of your mind was aggravated by any voluntary act of mine. I will myself withdraw, therefore, and will not return here until after the birth of your child — always supposing that you are not deceived as to your condition.’

“Olaus did, in fact, depart, saying to everybody that he did not believe a word of this story of pregnancy, but that he was in no haste to enter into his inheritance.

“ ‘For the sake of propriety, and in consideration of my sister-in-law’s unhappy state of excitement,’ he added, ‘I prefer to wait, and can very well afford to do so for a year, if necessary, so that the truth may be established.’

“These were the views he expressed to my father at Stockholm, whither he now immediately returned, and my father, I remember, blamed him for being too confiding, and over-delicate. He thought Baroness Hilda had invented this posthumous child, and intimated that it would not be the first time that a widow had brought forward a supposititious heir so as to despoil the rightful inheritor. The baron, however, replied with infinite mildness :

“ ‘What would you have me do? I am tired of the hateful suspicions which this exasperated woman is trying to fasten upon me, and can best refute them by proving the disinterestedness of my own conduct. And furthermore, to provide against being pursued by her hatred even here, I think it will be best for me to travel until my affairs can be settled.’

“Shortly after this Baron Olaus went to Russia, where he was received by the czarina with much attention, and where he began to construct that web of intrigues whose

result has been to make him one of the most tenacious and dangerous of the cap-party of the Diet. It has been asserted that his character developed very rapidly during his stay at the Russian court, and that, at his return, he had acquired such views, manners, and principles, as caused him, from that time, to appear totally changed. He was still always tranquil and smiling, but there was something terrible in his tranquillity, something sinister in his smile. He was still friendly and caressing in his manner to inferiors, but his friendliness was contemptuous, and his caresses the soft touch of the covered claw. In short, he was precisely what he is to-day — except so far as advancing years and ill-health have intensified his more gloomy traits — a problematic being, who is either the most consummate of villains or the victim of a most strange combination of terrible circumstances. He now entered upon a career of intrigue and crime, which the czarina has shown great skill in turning to her own advantage, and of which the virtuous baron himself was very soon heard to speak with complaisant admiration ; and it was at this time that he began to be called ‘The Snow Man,’ either to signify that his heart had been frozen during his residence in Russia, or that his reputation had, as it were, thawed in the clearer and warmer sunshine of his own country. The surname was made the more appropriate by his physical characteristics, for, in the course of time, a livid paleness became the habitual color of his face, his hair turned prematurely gray, his carriage was stiff, and his bloated hands were invariably as cold as death.

“But I must not anticipate. This change in the baron, which was, perhaps, only the effect of an exhausting struggle against unjust suspicions, did not become thus striking until after the death or disappearance of all the persons whose existence might have been disadvantageous to him. While still in Russia he caused it to be reported in Sweden that he was mortally ill, and it was believed by many that this was one of the first proofs of his accomplishments as an intriguer. This report was said to be totally unfounded ; and when it was afterwards asked what reason he could

have had for the strange whim of declaring that he was dying at St. Petersburg, his enemies alleged that it was to relieve Baroness Hilda from her fear of him, and thus prevent her from coming to have her child born at Stockholm. Unfortunately — I am stating the views of the enemies of Olaus — the baroness fell into this snare. She remained at Waldemora during the summer, and, when her pregnancy was so far advanced that it was impossible for her to travel (she had become quite feeble in consequence of her many afflictions), Baron Olaus suddenly reappeared, as well and active as ever, in the neighborhood of the chateau.

“ There, Christian, that is all I can tell you of the story as it is generally current. The sequel is a secret history. What the facts are, can only be conjectured or imagined, until the proofs shall be discovered, if any such exist, and shall ever come to light.

“ The baroness was so frightened at learning that the baron was staying at Pastor Mickelson’s, that she resolved to shut herself up in the old chateau, which was so very limited in extent — for the new *gaard* had not then been built — that it could easily be defended by a small number of faithful servants. At the head of these were Adam Stenson, already grown old in the service at the chateau, and a confidential female attendant, whose name I have forgotten.

“ Now, what took place after that? It has been said that the baron succeeded in corrupting all the guardians of Stollborg, even the confidential waiting-woman and the incorruptible Stenson. But I would risk my right hand on the faith of Stenson; and, indeed, the continued good understanding between this excellent man and the baron, is to me almost conclusive proof of the innocence of the latter. There are two versions of the conclusion of this tragedy: one is that the baron imprisoned his sister-in-law so closely, and made her so unhappy in Stollborg, that she actually died of sorrow and chagrin; the other is, that she was already insane when she took up her abode there, that she soon became liable to dreadful fits of mania, and died amidst transports of impious

fury, cursing the evangelical religion, and proclaiming the kingdom of Satan.

“Amid all these varying rumors there is, however, one fact certain, and that is that her pregnancy was a simulated one. Ten months after her husband’s death, in the last days of the year 1746, the baroness died at Stollborg, where she **had been** living for three months in a state of bodily languor and mental disorder. On her death-bed, she formally acknowledged to Pastor Mickelson and the baron, that she had not been pregnant, but had intended to bring forward a counterfeit child, who was to have been a boy, in order to retain the control of her husband’s property, and to gratify her hatred of Baron Olaus. There is still a third version, which I really only mention with reluctance. It is that the baroness actually died of starvation in this donjon, but this Stenson has always emphatically denied. Whatever the facts are, the last moments of Hilda are enveloped in mystery. None of her own relatives were living, and her husband’s family, frightened at the reports that prevailed about her religious opinions, shut their eyes to the whole business, and did not move in her behalf. They had, in fact, always liked the compliant Olaus, who flattered their prejudices, better than the high-spirited Adelstan, who was constantly offending them. It is said that this story came to the ears of the king, and that he had meant to investigate it, but that the senate, in which Olaus had powerful friends, requested his majesty to attend to his own business—that is, to attend to nothing at all.

“My father was in very ill-health when Baron Olaus came to tell him his own version of his sister-in-law’s death. For the first time my father manifested some surprise, and even a disposition to blame the baron. He told him he had done wrong to expose himself to such grave suspicions, and that if proceedings should be commenced against him his defence would be difficult. The baron, on this, showed him the declaration of Pastor Mickelson, in his double capacity of clergyman and physician, in which he testified to the feigned pregnancy of the baroness, and to her death, in consequence of an illness of

which he had made a careful diagnosis, and had treated in a skilful and judicious manner, as all the physicians who had since been consulted on the subject had agreed. Moreover, he produced the declaration of the baroness, signed by her own hand, affirming that she had made a false representation of her condition. This paper my father examined rigorously, and even caused it to be scrutinized by experts in handwriting, but he found it impregnable. Still, I remember that he blamed the baron for not having called in ten physicians, instead of one only, for authenticating the facts for his own defence in so weighty a matter. But he never suspected him of any crime or imposture, and in this belief he died, a short time afterwards.

“After a time, murmurs were heard against the baron, whose conduct began to make him hated, but he very soon made himself feared also; there was no one whose direct interest it was to avenge his supposed victims, and no one came forward generous and bold enough to defy him. I myself would have done this, although then young at the bar, as I should be ready to do this moment if my suspicions were sufficiently aroused. But I was naturally influenced by my father’s opinion, and he had never gone further than to find fault with Olaus for not being prudent enough in his own behalf. Besides, my father’s death took place just about that time, and you can readily imagine that my sorrow, which was very keen, diverted my mind from other objects.

“I inherited the management of the baron’s law business, and, as I have said, notwithstanding the increasing dislike with which his political conduct and his personal manners have inspired me, I have never from that day to this been able to find the least proof of the crimes with which he is charged, or even to get hold of any probable or reliable evidence on the subject. Among his tenantry and retainers there has been a reaction in opinion about him, as might well have been expected; for as soon as he no longer needed their sympathy, he took no further pains to make himself popular. His domestics are all strangers, persons whom he substituted for the old servants immedi-

ately upon taking possession of the estate, and he pays them in a manner to secure from them blind obedience and absolute discretion. Stenson is the only one of the old household whom he has retained; he employed him for a long time as steward, but at last allowed him to retire, on account of his great age. He provides him with a suitable retreat, an honorable pension, and has always treated him with great respect, and even with marked friendliness. This has been supposed to indicate that Stenson was his accomplice; but, Christian, it is this very fact that satisfies me as to the truth of the matter, and which makes my own conscience easy; for Stenson is actually a holy man, a model of all the Christian virtues”

VIII.

CHRISTIAN had listened attentively to the lawyer's narrative, and, after a few moments' reflection, he observed:

“There is a great deal in this history that seems to me extremely ambiguous. I feel sorry for that poor Baroness Hilda; of all the persons of this drama, she is the one who interests me the most. Who knows whether she did not really die of starvation in this horrible chamber, as so many believe.”

“Ah! that is entirely out of the question!” cried M. Goeffe. “The idea really tormented me, so much has been said about it; but Stenson, who assuredly would never have allowed such a thing to happen, gave me his word of honor that he had served and waited upon the baroness to the last, and was with her during her last moments. She did really die of inanition, but it was because her stomach refused to retain food. The baron spared no pains to furnish her with whatever she desired.”

“No doubt,” replied Christian; “if he is as adroit as your story indicates, he would be unlikely to commit a useless murder. All that he needed was to kill the poor lady with fear or grief. But there is still another explanation, M. Goeffe; my own version!”

"What is that?"

"That she is not dead."

"That is impossible. And still, no one ever knew what was done with her body."

"There — you see!"

"The pastor refused it burial in the parish cemetery. There is no Catholic cemetery here, and it would seem that she must have been buried by night in Stenson's orchard, or elsewhere."

"Why, did Stenson never tell you?"

"Stenson will not be questioned on this point. The memory of the baroness is at once dear and awful to him. He loved her sincerely, and served her zealously; but he refuses to say anything about her religious belief, whatever it may have been, and it both terrifies and distresses him to have the subject even referred to."

"Very well; but what does he say of the baroness?"

"Nothing."

"That perhaps is saying a great deal."

"Very true; but still, silence is not a charge of murder."

"Then we need discuss it no further, if you are satisfied, M. Goefle. And after all, what does it matter to us? The past is past. Only, you said that the sight of that spectre had filled your mind with strange doubts."

"That was only because it is a weakness of our profession to turn everything into a subject of investigation — though I have always tried to guard myself against it. We have enough to do to arrive at the facts of the different cases with which we are intrusted, without volunteering to batter our brains over those that do not concern us. Beyond a doubt, it is because I have been idle for a few days that my mind keeps at work in spite of myself, and that I have summoned up from the shades of the forgotten past, the form of the Baroness Hilda —"

"Particularly," said Christian, "as the being who appeared to you was not perhaps a vision, but quite simply some living person, whose costume happened to be like that of the old picture."

"I should be glad to think so, but people who pass

through walls are none other than the sad inhabitants of the land of gloomy imaginations."

"Wait a moment, M. Goefle; you saw the phantom enter; but you have not told me which way it disappeared."

"I could not, since I do not know. I should say on the same side where it came in."

"By the secret door, then."

"Is there one?"

"Did you not know it?"

"No, I did not, really."

"Well, then, come and see it."

Christian took the candle and lighted M. Goefle to the spot; but the secret door was shut from the outside. It was so accurately fitted into the wood-work that it was impossible to distinguish it from the other panels, which were all ornamented with a similar raised moulding, and so thick that it gave back the same dull sound as the rest of the oak wainscot. Besides, it was strongly fastened behind by the large bolts that Christian had noticed the evening before. He had left them unfastened, but they had now been bolted, probably by the same hand that had padlocked the outer door at the foot of the secret staircase. Christian mentioned all this to M. Goefle, who was obliged to take his word for it, as he had no means of going to certify the facts.

"Believe me, M. Goefle," said Christian, "either some old servant of M. Stenson's came in here yesterday to put the room in order, without knowing that it had been invaded, or the Baroness Hilda is kept a prisoner somewhere in the building, either under our feet or over our heads; in the walled-up rooms above, for aught that I know. And by the way, how about that built-up door—you did not tell me where it led to, nor why it was closed. And yet that seems to me a rather interesting circumstance."

"A very ordinary one. Stenson told me all about it. The room over this was for a long time completely out of repair. When the Baroness Hilda took refuge at Stollborg, she had the door closed up because it let in

the wind and the cold. After her death, Stenson had it opened, to make repairs in the masonry of the upper part of the building. But as it would have cost more than it was worth to make the place habitable, and as nobody would have ventured to occupy rooms that were regarded as the devil's very head-quarters, on account of the Catholic chapel that was supposed to have been erected there, Stenson, with the baron's permission — as he himself told me — built it up solid again with his own hands. He did this both out of economy — there being no further use for the door — and to put a stop to the superstitious stories in circulation about the old building."

"Still, M. Goefle, you saw the supposed phantom come out from behind the map of Sweden that covers that masonry?"

"Oh, that was only a dream! Go and look, Christian. You will be more successful than I was, if you can find a practicable door there. Do you think I did not go and examine the place as soon as the vision disappeared?"

"Of course," said Christian, who had already ascended the stairs, raised the map of Sweden, and was rapping at different parts of the wall beneath it. "There's nothing here but a wall as thick as the rest, if I can judge by the dulness of the sound. The red paint also is accurately matched, and well laid on across the joinings; but did you notice, M. Goefle, how this plaster is scratched in the middle here?"

"Yes; I thought it had been done by a rat!"

"Very strange sort of work for a rat! Do you see what regular little circles he has traced on the wall?"

"True; but what of it?"

"Every effect has a cause; that is what I am seeking. Did you not say that among the sounds you had heard there was a scratching?"

"Yes; a grinding, as if of some tool."

"Well, do you know what I think it was? Some feeble or unskilful hand trying to break a hole in the wall, and look through."

•It must have been with a nail, then, or something still smaller, for the scratch in the plaster is certainly not more than two lines deep.”

“Not so much; and yet it has been cut into perseveringly in many places.”

“Stenson may have made those marks, to fix in his mind something or other that he did not choose to write down. Come, you must know how to decipher all sorts of lapidary inscriptions.”

“I know enough to say that it is no inscription, and belongs to no known language. I hold to my idea, that it was an attempt to pierce the wall. See, in each place there is a small hole with bevelled edges, made with a blunt instrument, and around it a circle, scratched into the white of the plaster, as if a pair of scissors had been used, after the fashion of a pair of dividers, but with one prong — that serving as the feeble support — broken.”

“You are ingenious.”

“Ingenious enough for that; do you see that little pile of white dust recently fallen on the upper stair?”

“Well?”

“Well, this person — whoever you may choose to consider her, an illustrious captive, or an old servant, who runs about the building at all hours — came here last night; not for the first time, but for the twentieth at least — to try and look through this wall. Or, stay — better yet! She knows there is a secret there — some invisible means of opening this invisible door — and she is searching, and feeling, and digging, to try and discover it. If we watch her to-night we shall find a clue to the mystery.”

“Upon my word, that is a good idea, and I accept it the more willingly because it relieves my mind of a real burden. Instead of being a seer of visions, I should then have seen a real person. I very much prefer to think it is so, although I am a little ashamed of myself for having had any doubts on the subject. However, Christian, I must tell you one thing frankly. I do not believe there is any prisoner here, for, in that case, there would have to be a prison and a jailer. Now this

room was open on both sides when you arrived, since you came in by one door and went out by the other, and there is no one for a jailer except Stenson, who is honest and devoted."

"But the baroness was certainly imprisoned here with more or less severity, and your honest Stenson was employed here then—"

"No, it has never been made to appear that there was any actual imprisonment; and even if it were so, Stenson was not master of Stollborg at that time. Now, when he alone has charge of it, for I presume you do not count Ulphilas as anybody—"

"Say what you like, M. Goefle, there is some mystery here; and whatever it is, whether great or trifling, I mean to solve it. But, great heavens, what am I thinking about! Time is passing, Puffo does not come back, and here I am amusing myself by inventing a romance when I ought to be thinking about the one I am to perform! I knew, M. Goefle, that when you made me eat, you would set me talking and make me forget my work!"

"Well, well, my boy, make your preparations, then. I promised to help you, you know!"

"You can't help me, M. Goefle, I must have my assistant. I'll go and look him up."

"Very well, go then. In the meanwhile I will go and see Stenson, to whom I have not yet had leisure to pay my respects, and who probably does not know I am here. He never comes into these premises—"

"Ah, I beg your pardon, M. Goefle, he does. He came in here only a little while ago. I saw him while you had gone out. There; I forgot to tell you of it. He took me either for the devil or for a ghost, for he was in an awful fright, and made his escape stumbling, and absolutely out of his wits with terror."

"Pshaw! Really? Is he so much of a coward as that? But I have no right to laugh at him, after imagining that I saw the *Gray Lady*. He certainly cannot have taken you for her!"

"I don't know who he took me for—perhaps for the ghost of Baron Adelstan."

"What? Well, it is possible. There is his portrait, opposite to his wife's; it is much of your size and figure. Still—in that costume—"

"I had not put it on. I was still in your black clothes."

"Why, what are you doing now? Masking?"

"No, I only put my mask on my head in case I should have to go as far as to the new chateau to find Puffo."

"Let me see the mask—it must be very unpleasant."

"Not at all; it is on a plan of my own; light and supple, all of silk, and lifting upon the head like the visor of a cap that can be put up or down at pleasure. When raised and hidden by my hat, it at least helps to hide my hair, which is so thick that it would attract attention. When it is down—I find it very comfortable, by the way, in this climate—it is in no danger of falling, and I am not annoyed by being constantly obliged to tie and untie a ribbon, which, moreover, is liable to break or become entangled. See what a neat invention it is!"

"Excellent! But your voice—how will you keep from being recognized by that?"

"Oh, that is my talent, my specialty! You know it very well, for you have been present at one of my performances."

"True. I would have taken my oath that there were a dozen of you in the box. I must see you this evening, by the way; I shall go and sit with the audience, but I don't want to know the piece beforehand. Well, good luck to you, my boy! I'm going to try and extract some explanation out of old Sten about my apparition. But what is that cypress-bough that you are putting on the frame of the *Gray Lady's* picture?"

"That is another thing that I forgot to tell you. M. Stenson brought it. I don't know what he meant to do with it, but he threw it down at my feet; and whatever his intention was, I am going to make a memorial offering of it to this poor Baroness Hilda."

"You may be sure, Christian, that this was also the intention of the good old man. It is either to-morrow or

to-day—stay a moment; I have a good memory for dates—*Mon Dieu!* this very day is the anniversary of the death of the baroness. That accounts for Sten's prevailing on himself to come here, to offer some prayer or other."

"Then," said Christian, as he detached the little slip of parchment which M. Goefle had taken for a ribbon from the branch around which it was rolled, "see if you can explain the verses of the Bible that are written on that. My time is so short that I will go without waiting now."

"Stay," said M. Goefle, who had put on his spectacles to read the slip of parchment; "if you go as far as to the new chateau, and find Master Nils, who has not come back here to attend to my lunch, will you do me the pleasure to take him by one ear and bring him along with you?"

Christian promised to bring him, alive or dead, but he did not have to go very far to find both his own valet and M. Goefle's. He went into the stable, where it occurred to him to look before leaving the court, and there he found Puffo and Nils snoring side by side, and both of them equally drunk. Ulphilas, who could bear liquor better, was walking backward and forward about the place, very well satisfied at not being left alone at nightfall, and from time to time casting a fraternal eye upon the two comrades of his revel. Christian saw how things had gone. Nils, who understood both Swedish and Dalecarlian, had acted as interpreter between the two drunkards, and their growing friendship had been cemented in the cellar. The poor little valet did not require much of a trial to become quite oblivious of his master, even supposing that he had been distressing himself particularly about him before. Now, he was lying warm and snug in the dry moss which they use for litter in that country, with cheeks red and nose on fire, and, as well as Puffo, had forgotten all about the cares of this vile world.

"Very good," said M. Goefle to Christian, who met him in the court, and brought him to see this touching

spectacle : "as long as the little rascal is not ill, I am very well satisfied not to have to wait upon him."

"But what am I to do, M. Goefle?" said Christian, in a great deal of perplexity : "I can't do without this beast of a Puffo. I have shaken him, but in vain. He's dead for the present. I know him ; he won't be himself for ten or twelve hours."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" answered M. Goefle, who was evidently preoccupied ; "go and select your piece, and don't trouble yourself ; a smart fellow like you is never at a loss."

And leaving Christian to get out of his difficulties as he best might, he walked on with his usual short, quick, determined step, straight to the pavilion, in the new *gaard* which Stenson occupied. Evidently the three verses of the Bible were whirling about busily in his head.

The lower floor of this pavilion was a sort of vestibule, which Ulphilas, who was afraid of being alone, preferred to his own lodging, and where he slept under the pretence of being at hand to wait upon his uncle, whose great age needed constant attendance. Ulph had just come into this vestibule, and had thrown himself down upon his bed, where he was already fast asleep and snoring. M. Goefle was about ascending to the upper floor, when he was arrested by the sound of voices in conversation. Two persons were talking, with great animation, in Italian. The voice of one of them was pitched in a high key, as is often the case with deaf persons, who cannot themselves hear what they are saying ; this was Stenson. He spoke the language with a good deal of facility, but with a detestable accent, and very incorrectly. The other person, who was speaking pure Italian in a noticeably clear voice, and with a very distinct pronunciation, seemed to make himself heard, in spite of the old man's deafness. M. Goefle was very much surprised to find that Stenson understood Italian, and could express himself in it either well or ill, for he did not know that he had ever had any occasion to use it. The conversation was being carried on in Stenson's office, which opened into his sleeping-room. The door at the head of the stairs was closed ; but M. Goefle, taking a

few steps up, heard a fragment of the dialogue, in substance as follows :

"No," said Stenson, "you are mistaken. The baron has no interest in making this discovery."

"Possibly, M. Steward," replied the unknown ; "but it will not cost me anything to ascertain."

"Then you propose to sell the secret to the highest bidder?"

"Perhaps so. What do you offer?"

"Nothing! I am poor, because I have always been honest and disinterested. I do not even own anything in this place. I have only my life. You may take that, if you choose."

At these words, which seemed to imply that old Stenson was at the mercy of some bandit, M. Goefle sprang up two more steps at a stride, to come to the rescue ; but the Italian resumed, with perfect composure :

"What should I do with that, Monsieur Stenson? Come, take courage! you can get yourself out of the difficulty by looking up some of your old crowns in your old box. Old people always have one. You found the means of paying Manasses, so as to secure his discretion."

"Manasses was an honest man. That salary —"

"Was not intended for him, I have no doubt ; but he thought otherwise, for he always kept it for himself alone."

"You are slandering him."

"Well, whether that is so or not, he is dead ; and *the other* —"

"He is dead, too. I know it."

"You know it! How do you know it?"

"I am not obliged to say. But I am certain that he is dead, and you can tell the baron anything you please. I am not afraid of you. Adieu! I have not long to live, so leave me to prepare for another world ; it is the only thing that I occupy myself about. Adieu! Leave me, I tell you. I have no money."

"That is your last word, is it? You know that within two hours I shall have taken service with the baron?"

"That makes no difference to me."

"You don't suppose I have come so far to be paid with nothing but such talk?"

"Do whatever you choose."

The door now opened, and M. Goefle stepped resolutely up towards the person who came out. He found himself confronting a man who seemed about thirty years of age, and who was quite handsome, though his face was singularly pale, and forbidding in expression. The lawyer's eyes met the stranger's as they passed close to each other on the narrow stairway; the gaze of the former was open, severe, and scrutinizing; that of the latter, oblique and distrustful. The unknown, however, bowed civilly, and passed down to the foot of the stairs, while M. Goefle proceeded to the top; but having reached those points, both turned for another look, and the advocate was struck with something diabolical in the sallow face below him gleaming in the light of the small lamp that hung before the inner door of the vestibule. On entering Stenson's room he found him seated with his head resting on his hands, as motionless as a statue, so that he was obliged to touch his arm to make known his presence. Even then, such was the old man's abstraction, that he looked up with a stupefied air; it was some moments before he recognized his visitor and recovered his presence of mind. Recollecting himself at last, he arose with a great effort and saluted M. Goefle with his usual politeness, inquiring after his health, and offering his own chair, which the lawyer, however, declined. On taking his hand, he found it warm and wet, either with perspiration or with tears. M. Goefle was deeply moved; he felt a great esteem and affection for Sten, and always treated him with the respect that was the proper tribute to his age and character. It was easy to see that the old man had passed through a terrible crisis, and that he had endured it with dignity; but what could this secret be which this stranger with the suspicious face and cynical language appeared to be holding suspended, like the sword of Damocles, over his head?

Stenson had by this time recovered his usual grave, and rather cold and ceremonious, demeanor. He had never been companionable with any one. Whether from

pride or shyness, he was as reserved with people whom he had known thirty years, as with those whom he met for the first time; and he was in the habit, moreover, of replying in monosyllables to all questions, the most important as well as the most trifling; knowing this, M. Goefle had been the more surprised at his connected conversation with the unknown, which he had overheard.

"I did not know that you had come to Waldemora, M. Goefle," he said; "is it about the lawsuit?"

"Yes, the baron's suit with his neighbor of Elfdalen, who, I think, may be in the right of it; I have advised the baron to arrange the affair, without pushing it to a legal decision. Can you hear me, M. Stenson?"

"Yes, monsieur, perfectly."

As the old man, from an excess of politeness, always made this reply whether he heard or not, M. Goefle, who was determined to have some conversation with him, put his mouth to his ear, and took pains to articulate every syllable very distinctly, but he soon saw that this precaution was less necessary now than had been the case in former years. Stenson's deafness, far from having increased, seemed to be sensibly diminished. M. Goefle congratulated Sten on this, but he shook his head, and said:

"It is temporary only; it changes a great deal. To-day I hear everything."

"Does not this occur when you have experienced some strong emotion?" asked M. Goefle.

Stenson looked at the lawyer with surprise, and, after hesitating a moment, made this answer—which was no answer at all:

"I am nervous—extremely nervous."

"Might I inquire," asked M. Goefle, "who the man was whom I just met going out from here?"

"I do not know."

"Did you not ask his name?"

"He is an Italian."

"But what is his name?"

"He said it was Guido."

"Does he propose to enter the baron's service?"

"Possibly."

"He has a bad face."

"Do you think so?"

"However, it will not be the only one about the baron."

Stenson gave no sign of assent, and his face remained unpassible. It was not easy to enter into conversation on delicate and confidential topics with a man whose ceremonious bearing seemed constantly to say, "Talk of your own business to me, not of mine." But M. Goefle was urged on by the demon of curiosity, and would not allow himself to be repulsed.

"This Italian was talking to you rather rudely," he said with abruptness.

"Do you think so?" replied the old man, with an air of indifference.

"I heard him while I was coming up stairs."

Sten's face showed some traces of emotion, but he asked no question betraying any uneasiness at what M. Goefle might have heard.

"He was threatening you," added the latter.

"With what?" asked Stenson, shrugging his shoulders; "I am so old —"

"He threatened to reveal something to the baron, which it is greatly to your interest to keep concealed."

Stenson remained perfectly quiet, as if he had not heard. M. Goefle persisted:

"Who is this Manasses who is dead?"

The same silence upon Stenson's part, while his impenetrable eyes, fixed on M. Goefle, seemed to say, "If you know, why do you ask?"

"And *the other*," the advocate went on, "what other was he speaking of?"

"Were you listening, M. Goefle?" questioned the old man in his turn, with a tone of extreme deference, but in which there was a distinct accent of disapproval.

The advocate felt some embarrassment, but his consciousness of his good intentions reassured him.

"Are you surprised, M. Stenson," he asked, after a pause, "that when I suddenly heard an unknown voice speaking to you in a threatening tone, I should have approached to help you, if necessary?"

Stenson held out to M. Goefle his aged, wrinkled hand, which had become cold once more.

His lips moved for some moments without uttering a sound—a natural action with a person unaccustomed to talking, and struggling to overcome his habitual reserve; but he hesitated so long, that M. Goefle, to encourage him, said:

“My dear M. Stenson, there is a secret oppressing you, and you are in serious danger in consequence.”

Stenson sighed, and replied laconically:

“I am an honest man, M. Goefle!”

“And yet,” answered the lawyer, with emphasis, “your conscience—a pious and sensitive one—is reproaching you for something!”

“Something?” repeated Stenson, with an air mild and yet firm, as much as to say, “Let me hear what you can allege against me!”

“You have, at least, to fear the vengeance of the baron?”

“No,” answered Stenson, with sudden decision of tone, “I know what the doctor told me.”

“Has the doctor given him up? Is his complaint so much advanced as that? I saw him this morning. He looked to me as if he might last a good while.”

“For months,” replied Stenson, “and I may last for years. I consulted the doctor yesterday; I do so every year.”

“You are waiting for his death, then, to reveal something of importance. But you are aware that he is said to be capable of having people whom he is afraid of assassinated. What do you think on that subject?”

Stenson answered by a look of surprise, which M. Goefle thought unquestionably assumed, for it was succeeded immediately by an expression of repressed anxiety. Stenson knew how to restrain himself, but not how to dissimulate.

“Stenson,” said the lawyer, with the energy of genuine sincerity, as he took both the old man’s hands in his, “I tell you again, some oppressive secret is weighing upon

you. Open your heart to me as a friend. You may rely upon me, if there is an injustice to be made good."

Stenson hesitated for some moments; then, taking a key from his pocket, he opened, in an agitated manner, a drawer of his desk, and, showing M. Goeffle a small sealed box, he said:

"Your word of honor?"

"I give it you!"

"And upon the holy Bible?"

"Upon the holy Bible — now then? —"

"Well, then, if I die before *him*, open, read, and act. But only after I am dead."

M. Goeffle glanced at the box, and saw his own name and address upon it.

"You had already chosen me for this trust," he said; "I thank you for it, my friend, but, if your life is threatened, why not tell me the whole at once? There, dear M. Stenson, I am beginning to open my eyes! The baron —"

Stenson made a sign that he would not answer.

"He starved his sister-in-law to death!"

"No," cried Stenson, with the emphasis of truth, "no, no! That was not the case!"

"But that declaration respecting her pregnancy — she was forced to sign it."

"She signed voluntarily, of her own free-will. I was present, and signed it also myself."

"But what became of her body? Was it thrown to the dogs?"

"Oh, my God! Was I not there? It was buried with religious services."

"By you?"

"By my own hands. But you are inquisitive! Give me the box!"

"Do you doubt my oath?"

"No," replied the old man; "keep it — and ask me no more questions."

He once more pressed M. Goeffle's hands, took a seat near the fire, and, either in reality or by design, relapsed into entire deafness. M. Goeffle, to divert his mind, and

hoping, after a little, to draw him again into a confidential mood, endeavored to talk with him about the lawsuit on which the baron had consulted him in the morning. But this time he was obliged to write what he wanted to say, when the old man answered with his usual clearness. His opinion was that the mineral property of the mountain-track in litigation belonged to the Count de Rosenstein, a neighbor of the baron. He stated good grounds for this belief, and, after searching among his papers, which were all arranged and marked with the greatest care, he laid out the actual proofs. M. Goefle observed that this was his own opinion, and that he should be forced to have a disagreement with the baron, if the latter should persist in seeking to employ him in a bad cause. He added some reflections as to the presumed wicked character of his client, but Stenson showed no signs of understanding these allusions; and as it is impossible to take a person by surprise in a written conversation, M. Goefle had to give up the idea of questioning him further.

On his way back to the bear-room, the lawyer considered whether he ought to communicate to Christian the understanding he had entered into with Stenson, and concluded that he was, on the whole, bound to silence. He was, besides, not just now in a confidential humor. Agitated by a thousand strange thoughts and contradictory suppositions, his brain was as actively at work as if he had just been intrusted with a difficult suit full of important questions. The exact contrary was the case, for Stenson had prohibited him from even feeling curiosity. This interdict, however, was altogether null; M. Goefle could not at all impose silence upon the tumult of his hypotheses. However, Christian's attitude made it easy for him to be reserved. Far from questioning him, the young man had forgotten all about their last conversation, and was absorbed by his comedy. He was, moreover, very much discouraged; and when the lawyer asked if he had arranged to do without his assistant, he answered that he had been trying in vain to do so for the last hour. He could, it is true, dispense with his services after a fashion; but at the risk of many accidents and undesir-

able omissions in the presentation of the piece. On the whole, he would have to make such heavy drafts on his brain and strength, and undergo such great fatigue, that he felt like giving up the whole thing.

"It is true," he said to M. Goeffe, who was trying to encourage him. "I give you my word that, to use a juggler's phrase, the game is not worth the candle. In plain words, I should tire myself to death, without benefit to my reputation, and I should swindle the baron out of his money. Do you know what I intend to do, M. Goeffe? Renouncing the idea of shining in this neighborhood, I shall bundle up all this luggage, and take up my line of march for some town where I can look up another assistant, competent to help me in representing, and pious enough to keep the oath which I shall exact from him, to drink nothing but water, even though all the mountains of Sweden should run down with wine!"

"The devil! the devil!" exclaimed M. Goeffe, greatly discomposed at the idea of losing his fellow-lodger; "if I thought I could make these small gentlemen perform a little — but, pshaw! I never could learn it!"

"Nothing easier. Try. The forefinger in the head, the thumb in one arm, the middle finger in the other — that's it! that's it, exactly. Come, make a bow. Lift the hands towards heaven!"

"That's easy enough! But to make the gestures match the words, and then to find something to say! I can only improvise monologue."

"Well, that's a great deal. Come, now, argue a case. Lift that arm, and forget that you are M. Goeffe; keep your eye on the figure that you are directing. As you speak, the gestures that you would naturally make with your arms, and the whole carriage of your person, will be reproduced of themselves at your fingers' ends. You only need to be convinced that the *burattino* is a real person, and to transfer your individuality from yourself to him."

"*Diantre!* That is very easy for you to say; but without any practice — well, let's try it. Suppose I am arguing, — what shall I argue, by the way?"

"Defend the baron from the charge of having caused the assassination of his brother!"

"Defend! I would rather argue against than for him."

"If you are against him, you will be pathetic; if for him, you may perhaps be comic."

"So be it," said M. Goefle, extending the hand on which he held the marionette, and making it gesticulate.

"Here goes; attend:

"What accusation can you bring against my client, you who reproach him for an action so simple and natural as merely the suppression of a troublesome member of his family? Why should he be blamed for that? When has it ever been expected that a man fond of money and display should pay regard to the vulgar consideration which you call the right to live? The right to live! We all claim it equally, and if we have the right to live, have we not also the right to live as we please? But if we cannot live without a considerable fortune, without the privileges of an elevated station; if we find that we should die of shame and mortification, fairly burst with ennui, to use a colloquial phrase, unless able to command luxury, castles, credit, and power; if all this is so, why, then, we possess the right, we demand the right, we seize the right, of removing from our path all obstacles whatever which may impede the most expansive, extensive, and radiant development of our whole moral and physical being. In our justification we may —"

"Higher!" interrupted Christian, who was laughing at the satirical argument of the lawyer.

"We may cite," continued M. Goefle, elevating the pitch of his voice, "the traditions of ancient times, from Cain down to the great King Birger-Iarl, who starved his two brothers to death in the chateau of Nikœping. Yes, gentlemen, we point you to the ancient customs of the north, and, moreover, to the glorious example of the court of Russia of late years. Who of you will venture to weigh petty moralities against the great consideration of a reason of state? I say a reason of state, gentlemen. Do you know what that is?"

"Higher!" repeated Christian; "higher, M. Goefle!"

"A reason of state," squealed M. Goefle, in a falsetto — for the range of his voice did not extend high at all — "a reason of state is, in my judgment —"

"Higher!"

"Go to the devil! I shall burst my pharynx! I've had enough, thank you, if I've got to scream in that way."

"Why, no, my dear sir! I did not tell you to speak higher. I've been lifting up my arm to you this hour; you do not observe that if you hold the marionette down there at the level of your breast no one can see it, and that you will be playing exclusively for your own benefit. See here: your hand must be higher than your head. Come, now, let's try a dialogue. I am the counsel on the other side, and I interrupt you in an excess of indignation, which I cannot restrain: 'I absolutely cannot endure this any longer; and since the judges think proper to sit sleeping on the bench before such an abuse of the faculty of human speech, notwithstanding the specious eloquence of my illustrious and powerful adversary, I —' Interrupt me, M. Goefle; you must always interrupt."

"The counsel for the prosecution," said M. Goefle, "is not arguing at present. I am playing the judge, now."

"Very good; but use another voice."

"I don't know how."

"Yes, indeed; you have one hand free. Pinch your nose."

"Good!" said M. Goefle, with a strong twang. "The counsel for the prosecution will speak in his own turn."

"Bravo! I insist on speaking this moment! I demand the right of confounding the odious sophistry of the defence! —"

"Odious sophistry!"

"Capital! oh, capital! In an angry tone! Now I reply: 'Orator without principle! I hand you over to the ban of Public Opinion!' Give me a slap, M. Goefle."

"What! — give you a slap?"

"Certainly, my lawyer, I mean: fair in the face, and let it be a loud one. The public always laughs at

that sound. Hold tight with your fingers; I'm going to pull your cap off. Now we collar each other. Bravo! Pull the marionette off my fingers with yours, and throw it over into the audience. The children run after it, pick it up, examine it with admiration, and throw it back into the theatre. Take care and have it fall on its head; the public will almost burst with laughter. God only knows what for, but they always do it. Abuse and blows are a delightful spectacle to the crowd; and under cover of the laughter, your personage marches off the stage with a triumphant air."

"And we have time to take breath! In good season, too; I have talked myself hoarse."

"Take breath? Oh, not at all! The operators can never stop to take breath. We must hurry and take the actors for the next scene; and for fear the audience will lose its interest before an empty stage, we must keep up the dialogue, as if the actors who just went off were still quarrelling behind the scenes, or as if those on the point of coming on were chattering about what had just happened."

"Plague on it! Why it's a business that would wear out a horse!"

"I don't deny it; still you get excited and warmed up, and keep on growing more and more spirited. Well, let us try another scene, M. Goeffe. Let us bring out—"

"But I have had quite enough of it, I believe. Do you suppose I want to help you conduct the exhibition?"

"I thought you meant that you would help me this evening!"

"I? What! I go on the stage?"

"Who will know that it is you? The theatre will be set up immediately before the door of a room where no one is allowed to enter. There is a curtain between you and the audience; and, if necessary, you can mask yourself, if there is any risk of being met in the corridors as you go in or out."

"True enough, nobody sees you, nobody knows that you are there; but my voice, my pronunciation? Be-

fore I should have uttered a dozen words every one would say: 'Good! that's M. Goefle!' A fine effect that would have, from a man of my age, practising a dignified profession! It's impossible; don't think of it."

"It's a great pity—you would succeed capitally!"

"Do you think so?"

"Most assuredly. You would have secured me a great success."

"But that devil of a voice of mine, that everybody knows!"

"There are a thousand ways of changing that. I can show you three or four in a quarter of an hour, and that is more than you would need for this evening."

"Well, what are they? If I were only sure that nobody would suspect me of such a piece of nonsense! Ah, there's an instrument that I can see the use of—a nose-pinch! And this one is to be used in the mouth, either on the tongue or under it."

"Oh no!" said Christian; "those are rude contrivances that Puffo uses. You are too intelligent to need them. Now listen, and imitate me."

"Really," said M. Goefle, after some experiments that were promptly successful, "it is not so bad! I used to act in private theatricals in my younger days, and I did as well as other people. I understand very well how to imitate a toothless old man, a drawling coxcomb, and a pedant that licks his lips at every word. Now, if you will not make me talk too much and fatigue my throat, I will go through three or four scenes with you. But we must have a rehearsal. What is the piece? Where is it? What's the name?"

"Wait a minute, M. Goefle. I have a number of manuscripts that you would be ready with after reading them over once; especially since the one represented, summed up in few words, and written in large letters, is always hung up before us inside of the front of the theatre. But what I should like in playing with you is, to arrange a new piece, which would entertain you more, and would give scope to your faculty for im-

provising. Now, if you will take my opinion, we will go right to work, and get one up between us."

"That's an excellent idea!" said M. Goefle. "Well, quick, then! let's sit down here; we can make room enough on this table. What shall the subject be?"

"Whatever you like."

"Well, then, your own history, Christian; or at least some parts of it, just as you told it to me."

"No, M. Goefle, my history is not an amusing one, and it would not inspire me with any brilliant fancies. The only romantic part of it is just that which I am myself ignorant about, and I have often taken this as the basis of my Stentarello's adventures. Stentarello, you know, is a personage who adapts himself to all characters and all situations. Well, one of my fancies is to attribute to him a mysterious birth, such as mine was; and I often begin my pieces by making him narrate the precise circumstances of that story, whether true or false, which the little Jew told Sophia Goffredi. I have sometimes amused myself by the idea that I should some day hear an exclamation or a cry in the audience that would be the means of directing me to my mother. But that is a mere fancy. As for Stentarello, he is a comic individual, sometimes young and sometimes old, according as I nail a blond or a white wig on his head. Of course, in order to be laughed at, he must be ridiculous. In such a plot as I refer to, and which I propose that we should adopt, he goes about in search of his parents, taking it for granted that he is nothing less than the natural son of a king. Then the action of the piece takes him through a series of absurd adventures, in the course of which he makes various ridiculous blunders, until he ends by discovering that he is the son of a mere country clown; but by that time he has had so many mortifications, that he thinks himself fortunate to find food and shelter with his father."

"Very good," said M. Goefle, "we will make him an epicure, and the son of a cook or confectioner."

"Exactly the thing. That's the idea. Well, shall we begin?"

"Do you write, if you can do it legibly. My writing can hardly be read. My hand can't keep up with the flow of my ideas, and I scratch away like a cat. The deuce — what a good hand! But what are you doing?"

"Putting down the *dramatis personæ*."

"Yes, I see that; but you have written in the first act: *Stentarello in swaddling clothes?*"

"That is my idea. I am tired of making my poor Stentarello repeat the story of being let down by a cord out of a window into a boat. If you agree, I will paint that scene instead."

"Paint it? But how the devil will you do it?"

"I have an old castle amongst my scenery here."

"What good will that do?"

"I will transform it into Stollborg. We will give it another name, but I will use the same romantic view that struck me so forcibly on the lake at sunset, and of which I made a sketch."

"You are going to paint?"

"Yes; while you write, whether well or ill, it makes no difference; I have deciphered such quantities of hieroglyphics with my poor Goffredi! Remember, we have very little time. I have whatever is necessary to change my scenes for the requirements of any special occasion. A little dissolved glue in a tin box, and a few bags of powdered paint of different colors, are enough. The canvas is no larger than the back of my theatre, and the colors dry in five minutes. That will be about as much time as I shall need to introduce a window into my square tower. See, Monsieur Goeffe, in the first place I render it practicable by making a slit in the canvas with my shears, and then I warm my glue on the stove. With this charcoal I sketch that row of great boulders. Some of them hang over — I studied them carefully, for it is a wonderful group. I give the tone of ice to this foreground — oh no, it must be water, since we are to have a boat —"

"Where will you get it?"

"In the property-box there. Don't you suppose I have a boat? There are ships, too, and carriages, and carts,

and all kinds of animals. I could not get along at all without that collection of profiles that are necessary in all my pieces, and which take up very little room. Another idea, M. Goeffe: I will put the boat in that vault under the boulders."

"What for?"

"Why, because it will give us a splendid effect! We are to have a very mysterious birth for our infant, I suppose?"

"Of course."

"Environed with perils?"

"Necessarily."

"A natural child?"

"As you please about that."

"A jealous husband? No, no adulterers! If this does really happen to be my own story, I should prefer not to be the fruit of an unlawful love. My mother — poor woman, I have perhaps nothing with which to reproach her — is saving me from the vengeance of some brother or savage uncle, capable of killing me in order to hide a discreditable or clandestine marriage."

"Very good; I'll be the Spanish nobleman — some implacable uncle who is trying to kill the child! The innocent creature is concealed in the bottom of the lake, at the risk of a little drowning, after having been thrown out of the window, to save it from all danger."

"Oh, no, no, M. Goeffe! you are altogether too fantastic! That is not my style at all. I always maintain a certain verisimilitude, even in romancing, for you can neither make people laugh nor cry with impossible situations. No, no, we must have some regular assassins, as ugly and grotesque as they can be made. While they are standing guard on top of the boulders, watching the window, the boat, which fortunately has already stealthily received its precious charge — that's the regular style — glides noiselessly along beneath the rocks, under the very feet of the unsuspecting watch. The audience is affected, and all the more because it is laughing at the same time at the faces of the assassins — people like extremely to laugh and cry at the same time — and the curtain falls on the first act, amid thunders of applause!"

"Excellent, excellent!" said M. Goefle; "but, while you are moving the boat, will there be no person at the window?"

"Certainly. Have I not two hands? With the left I propel the skiff over the limpid waves, and with the right I hold up at the window the faithful waiting-woman, who has lowered down the basket, and who lifts towards heaven her pretty little wooden arms in an attitude of supplication, and prays in a sweet voice, 'Divine Providence! watch over the child of mystery!'"

"Yes, but the mother; is she not to be seen?"

"No, that would not be the correct thing."

"And the father?"

"The father is in Palestine. That is the place where we always send the people we don't know what to do with."

"That will do very well; but if there are to be assassins, a haughty Castilian uncle, and a faithful waiting-woman, Stentarello must belong to a noble family."

"The devil! yes; how shall we arrange that?"

"It is perfectly easy. The child whom we lower from the window is the young Alonzo, son of the duchess. Stentarello is the son of his grace's pastry-cook."

"But what is the pastry-cook to do?"

"I don't know. It's your business to find that out. If you keep on painting you won't help me at all."

"But only see, M. Goefle, how beautifully my sky is coming out!"

"Too much so; it is too prominent."

"You are right, so it is! What an eye you have, M. Goefle! I must bring up the color of my donjon, then, a little."

"That will do very well. That rosy sky is just about right now, and gives a very good idea of the brilliant cloud effects that we have here. But that is not a Spanish sky, is it?"

"Well, why not lay the scene in Sweden?"

"Oh dear me, no! Don't you see that as we have arranged the play, particularly with that view of Stollborg that you have been painting, a certain comparison might

be suggested—if you should give your imagination free play?”

“With the story of the Baroness de Waldemora?”

“Might there not? In reality there would be no sort of similarity, since she had no child. But there are persons who might suppose that we were representing the pretended captivity of the *Gray Lady*. No, Christian, lay the scene in Spain; it will do much better.”

“Spain be it, then! Well, the pastry-cook has a son, just born, who is to grow up into the illustrious Stentarello. Now, the cook of the chateau, who has sent to this pastry-cook by order of the baron—”

“The baron?”

“That is your fault, you put the baron into my head by talking of your possible comparisons. Our traitor must be called Don Diego, or Don Sancho.”

“With all my heart. Now, the baron’s cook—There! I am as bad as you!—Don Sancho’s, I mean—what did he send to the pastry-cook?”

“A magnificent pie in a basket, to be baked.”

“I see, I see! He had placed this basket in the boat. The boatman, employed to carry off and preserve the Child of Mystery, does not notice it, and thus carries away two baskets; then he makes a mistake, and puts the pie out to nurse, and gives the pastry-cook the baby to bake.”

“So the good pastry-cook brings up both the children, or, rather, he mistakes and brings up the child of the duchess. Thus there arise endless entanglements, and we can go forward with confidence to our denouement. Courage, M. Goefle! the painting is done, and now for the pen again. Let us arrange the scenes. Scene First: The cook, solus.”

“Wait, Christian! Why not have the child quietly carried down by a staircase?”

“True, particularly as Stollborg has a secret staircase, but it was watched by the assassins.”

“Were they incorruptible?”

“No, but the duchess is very short of money, while the traitor has his pockets full.”

"Why don't he go himself to the tower where his victim is imprisoned, and throw the child out of the window, without so much ceremony?"

"I really don't know. We must make it out that the child is not yet born, and that they are waiting for the fatal moment."

"That will do very well! The child, then, must be born at the very moment that Don Sancho enters the donjon and ascends the stairs. Paquito, the waiting-woman, lowers down the infant that has just seen the light. But tell me, is the child to be visible?"

"Certainly. I am going to paint it in its cradle. There's a string for the rope. All those things are cut out in profile; they are to be seen from a distance."

"So the traitor, to his great disappointment, finds the bird flown. What does he do? Shall we make him fall out of the window and break his skull on the rocks?"

"Oh no! Keep that for the catastrophe of the piece; it's a capital one."

"Very well then, in his rage he kills his unhappyniece. A cry is heard, and the murderer appears at the window, exclaiming: 'My honor is avenged!'—"

"His honor! I would rather have him say: 'My fortune is made!'"

"Why?"

"Because he is the heir of the duchess. We must not make him a scoundrel by halves, since we are to fracture his skull for him at the end."

"That is certainly very logical, but —"

"But what?"

"Why, that would be the exact history of Baron Olaus, as his enemies relate it. A female relative imprisoned, who disappears—"

"What difference does it make, as long as you are sure that the story is not true?"

"I am as sure as it is possible to be; and yet—you know, with your mysterious voice, your idea of a prisoner in the vaults down below, your explanation of my last night's vision, and your verses from the Bible,

you have made me a perfect dreamer ; my mind is filled with all sorts of strange notions."

"But as there is every reason to believe that these notions are nothing more than the work of our own imaginations, we shall run no risk of offending any one. And besides, M. Goefle, even if, under my mask and with my assumed name of Christian Waldo, I should awaken unpleasant memories in the baron's mind, please to tell me what difference that will make to me? or to you either, since you will be perfectly incognito as well as myself—"

"But it will be easy for the baron to have me watched and discovered ; — he has only to give orders to some of those rascally servants of his —"

"Oh, if you are to be exposed to any real danger, let us give it up at once ; but in that case we must choose another subject immediately."

M. Goefle was silent, and absorbed in thought for some moments, greatly to the annoyance of the impatient Christian, who saw with anxiety the steady advance of the hands of the clock. At last, the advocate, striking his forehead, and jumping up with a certain nervous excitement of manner, cried out, as he began to pace rapidly up and down the room :

"Well, well ! Who can say that I am not shrinking from the pursuit of the real truth? Shall I be a mere cowardly courtier of this problematical being? Is it not my duty to satisfy myself once for all? Shall I let it be said that an adventurer—let me rather say a good and handsome child of fortune, who most surely deserves a better fate—that he, in his heedless career, is courageous enough to defy a powerful enemy, while I, dedicated by my very office to the service of the truth, the appointed defender of human and divine justice, allow myself to be lulled to sleep by a selfish indolence, not far removed from cowardice? Christian," added M. Goefle, resuming his seat, but still with much excitement of manner, "go on to the second act ! Let us make a terrible thing of it ! Let your marionettes cover themselves with glory ! They shall be real persons, living beings, instruments of des-

tiny, like the players in the tragedy of Hamlet, who terrify and make pale the triumphant criminal, who is finally unmasked. Come, to work! Suppose — suppose all the crimes which are charged against the baron; that he poisoned his father, assassinated his brother, and starved his sister-in-law to death.”

“Precisely; in this room, too!” said Christian, who was thinking of the scenery for his third act. “What a capital scene it will make! We must make the child — the son of the duchess, of course — come back at the end of twenty-five years, to search out the truth and punish the murderer! We can make the marionettes break down the mysterious wall, and discover there — behind that brick-work — I could very quickly get up the scenery for that, I should have time enough —”

“Discover what?” asked M. Goeffe.

“I don’t know,” replied Christian, suddenly becoming thoughtful, and even gloomy. “The ideas that occur to me are so terrible, that I must give up that part of the plot; it takes away all my inspiration; and, instead of continuing the piece, I should have to go and break down that wall myself, out of a mere rage of curiosity —”

“Come, come, friend Christian, don’t go crazy! It is quite enough if I am so; this whole thing is nothing but imagination, and I cannot conscientiously attach weight to suspicions which perhaps originate only in an overworked stomach, or a brain restless from inaction. Come, finish the piece, and let it be inoffensive if it is to be amusing. For my part, I must do a little work for myself; I have a portfolio of papers to examine that Stenson gave me, and I must prepare a definite opinion upon them, for I promised the baron this morning to have it ready, and he may send for it at any moment.”

Christian accordingly set to work at his drama, and M. Goeffe at his parcel of papers, each at the end of a long table, to the middle of which they had pushed the breakfast dishes. Ulphilas now entered, and silently began to rearrange the table. He was in his usual state of half-conscious drunkenness, and shortly he entered upon a

long discussion with M. Goefle, which Christian neither understood nor heard, as to the merits of a certain soup of milk, beer and syrup, a national dish, which M. Goefle wanted for supper, and which Ulphilas claimed to prepare as skilfully as any man in Sweden. By the promise of this delicacy he disarmed the anger of the lawyer, who had scolded him for getting his little valet tipsy. Ulphilas, besides, swore he did not know what M. Goefle meant, and perhaps in good faith, considering the steady coolness with which he himself carried all kinds of liquors.

By six o'clock, Christian had completed his task, while M. Goefle, who seemed restless and agitated, was still at work. As Christian happened to look towards him, he noticed the fixed and abstracted expression of his eyes. Supposing that this might be the lawyer's usual appearance while at his work, he abstained for a time from interrupting him, but finally thought it necessary to ask, which he did a little uneasily, if he would not read the outline of the piece.

"Yes, certainly," said M. Goefle; "but why not read it over to me?"

"Impossible, M. Goefle. I must select my actors, arrange their costumes in some sort of harmony, collect my scenes, load my ass, and hurry over to the new chateau, so as to take possession of the quarters intended for us, set up the theatre, arrange the lights, etc. I have not a moment to lose; we must begin at eight o'clock."

"Eight o'clock? The devil! What a detestable hour! They don't have supper at the chateau until ten o'clock, and pray when shall we have our supper?"

"Oh, to be sure! The fifth meal of the day!" cried Christian, in despair, but rapidly continuing his preparations. "For heaven's sake, M. Goefle, have your supper now, and be ready an hour from this time! You can read over the piece while you are eating."

"Oh, of course! A fine regimen you propose! To eat without an appetite, and to read in the meanwhile, so as to make it impossible for me to digest my food."

"Very well; then let us think no more about it! I'll

try to get along by myself. I'll do my best! Pshaw! Some good angel or other will come to my rescue."

"No, no!" cried M. Goeffe; "by no means! I'll be the good angel. I promised you; and I'm a man of my word."

"No, M. Goeffe; I thank you, however, all the same. You are not used to the business. It will not suit a reasonable man like you to interrupt your important business to put a fool's cap on your head! It was indiscreet in me to think of such a thing."

"What!" exclaimed M. Goeffe. "Pray what do you take me for? A mere babbler, who makes promises that he knows he can't keep; or an old pedant, who don't know enough to talk good nonsense?"

Christian saw that the best way to keep the lawyer up to the enterprise was to oppose him, and that the worthy gentleman was really very much in earnest in his scheme of transforming himself into a merry-andrew, without any more preparation than Christian himself required. He continued, therefore, to maintain his show of reluctance as to accepting his services, and did not leave him until he was almost vexed at Christian's doubts, besides being fully resolved, and, indeed, all on fire to fulfil his engagement; even although he should have to eat his milk-and-beer soup without an appetite, and no matter how tremendous the violation of all his customary habits.

Christian had proceeded half way from Stollborg to Waldemora, when he suddenly found himself face to face with a sort of black phantom, speeding over the ice with uneven leaps. It required but a moment's thought to recognize M. Stangstadius, who, like himself, was carrying a small dark lantern, and who was evidently preparing to accost him. Feeling very confident that he would not be recognized by a person so oblivious of others, he thought it unnecessary to put down his mask, or to change his voice in answering him.

"Hallo, my friend!" called out the man of science, without even condescending to look at him; "do you come from Stollborg?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you see Dr. Goeffle there?"

"No, monsieur," replied Christian, who saw at once how dangerous to his colleague's good resolutions the professor's visit might prove.

"What!" said Stangstadius; "Dr. Goeffle not at Stollborg? He told me he was lodging there."

"He was," said Christian, with great coolness, "but he left for Stockholm two hours ago."

"Left? Left without waiting for my visit, when I told him this very morning that I would come and take supper with him at the old tower? It's impossible."

"He must have forgotten it."

"Forgotten! Forgotten that *I* was coming to see him. That's a likely story, indeed!"

"Well, sir," said Christian, "you can go over there if you choose. You will find neither supper nor company."

"Well, then, I must give it up. But it's the most extraordinary thing. That poor Goeffle must have gone crazy!"

Turning about, M.^r Stangstadius walked along by the side of Christian, who continued on towards the chateau; but in a few seconds the philosopher, on reflection, changed his purpose, and, talking aloud to himself after his fashion, said:

"So, Goeffle has gone off! Well, he's a scatter-brained, extravagant fellow. But there's that nephew of his — for he has a nephew — a charming young man and a capital talker. He must have told him that I was coming, and he no doubt is waiting for me. I must go over; certainly I must!"

Stopping abruptly, he turned to Christian:

"See here, friend," he cried, "I have made up my mind to go to Stollborg after all, and as I have been walking a great deal to-day in the snow, I am extremely tired. Lend me your pony, will you?"

"It would give me great pleasure to do so, monsieur; but if you are proposing to go there after M. Goeffle's nephew —"

"Certainly, yes; Christian Goeffle, that's his name.

Did you see him? You are one of the servants at Stollborg. I suppose. Very well, go back there with me. Give me the beast, walk on ahead, and tell them to prepare supper. That's a good idea."

Thereupon M. Stangstadius, without troubling himself to wait for leave from Christian, undertook to mount Jean, whom he persisted in taking for a horse, and whose small stature and quiet pace had impressed him very favorably. As to his load, he paid no sort of attention to that, although it was very effectually in his way.

"Let the beast alone, will you!" said Christian, annoyed at his obstinacy. "M. Goefle's nephew went away with his uncle, and Stollborg is shut up like a prison."

"The young man gone too!" cried Stangstadius, in the greatest amazement. "*Mon Dieu!* some great misfortune must have happened in that family, or both uncle and nephew would never have forgotten my promise. But they must, anyhow, have left a letter for me, and I'll go and get it."

"They did not leave any letter," said Christian, bethinking him of a new expedient: "they directed me to say to some person of the name of Stangstadius at the new chateau that they had been obliged to go away. That is why I am going to the new chateau."

"Person of the name of Stangstadius!" cried the insulted philosopher: "is that what they said?"

"No, monsieur; that is what I said. I don't know this M. Stangstadius, myself."

"Ah, you said it, did you, you idiot? Person of the name of Stangstadius, indeed! Don't know him yourself, you great beast! Good, by George! I like that! Very well, learn to know me, then. I am the first naturalist—But what's the use? Such monstrous ignoramuses as one finds on this poor earth! Stop your horse, you animal! Did I not tell you I wanted to ride? I'm tired, I say. Do you suppose I don't know how to manage any kind of beast whatever?"

"Come, come, M. Naturalist," said Christian, with perfect coolness, although feeling very much annoyed at this interview, which was delaying him so unexpectedly;

"don't you see that the poor creature is loaded up to his eyes already?"

"What of that? Unload him, I say! you can come back for your load."

"Impossible. I can't spare the time."

"What! you disobey me? What sort of savage are you? You are the first Swedish peasant who ever refused to assist Dr. Stangstadius. I will inform against you, miserable rascal, I give you my word. I'll complain of you!"

"To whom? The Baron de Waldemora?"

"No, for he would have you hung; and good enough for you, too. But I am kind-hearted; I want you to understand that. I am the best man alive, and I forgive you."

"Nonsense!" said Christian, who could not help at times diverting himself a little with the strange persons whom he encountered in his wandering life. "I don't know you, and I strongly suspect that you are not the person you claim to be. You a naturalist! Out upon you! You can't even tell a horse from an ass."

"An ass?" said Stangstadius, diverted at once, fortunately, from his whim of equitation; "do you pretend to have an ass there?"

He inspected Jean with his lantern; but thanks to Christian's solicitude, the animal was so well wrapped up in skins of various kinds, that it presented a most fantastic appearance.

"An ass? It can't be! An ass could not live in this latitude. What you, in your brutal ignorance, call an ass, is nothing more than some kind of mule at the most! Come, let me see it;—take off those borrowed skins—"

"Hold, monsieur!" said Christian; "whether Stangstadius or not, you have tired me out. I can't talk with you any longer. Good-evening."

With that, he tickled the legs of the faithful Jean with a switch; the animal broke into a trot, and the two quickly left the philosopher behind them. But soon, Christian, who was always good-natured, felt a sort of remorse for his rudeness. As he reached the edge of the

lake, he looked back, and saw the poor doctor of sciences following on with much difficulty, and many slips and tumbles. He must really have been very much fatigued to have been at all conscious of it, for his identity was concentrated in his brains and in his tongue; and still more to have confessed it: for he claimed to be the most robust man of the age.

"If his strength should fail him," thought Christian, "he might lie down there on the ice, and, in this region, a moment's sleep out of doors on such a night as this would, perhaps, be fatal—particular to a feeble being like that. Come, stand still, Jean! wait for me."

He hastened towards M. Stangstadius, who had, in fact, come to a halt, and was perhaps revising his determination of going to dine at Stollborg. At this idea, Christian redoubled his speed; but Stangstadius, who was not always so brave as he pretended, and who had conceived strong prejudices against a person so little inclined to bow down before his greatness as his late companion, instantly suspected him of the worst designs against his own person; and, recovering his strength, he set off towards Stollborg as hard as he could go. But this did not suit Christian at all, and he began to run also, and quickly came up with him.

"Wretch!" cried the learned man in a broken voice, for his terror and exhaustion had reached a climax, "you mean to kill me, I know! Yes, my enemies have hired you to extinguish the very light of the world! Let me alone, you miserable scoundrel! don't touch me! Think who it is that you are about to lay hands on!"

"Come, come! compose yourself, M. Stangstadius," said Christian, laughing at his terror; "and have a better appreciation of people who want to do you a service! Come, get on my back, and be quick about it; I am all in a perspiration with running after you, and I don't want to stay here and take cold."

Stangstadius complied, though with a good deal of reluctance, but he was relieved when he saw how easily the powerful young man lifted him, and carried him ashore. There, Christian placed him on his feet, and

hastened forward, to escape his generosity; for, in his gratitude, the worthy Stangstadius was rummaging his pockets for a two-sou piece, convinced that this would be a royal gift for one who had had the happiness of rendering him a service.

IX.

CHRISTIAN left the professor to proceed towards the main entrance of the chateau, while he himself sought the side door, which in all feudal manors leads to the courts and outer buildings. Drawing down his mask, he called a servant, who helped him unload; and then, after seeing that his ass was suitably accommodated, he ascended a private staircase leading to the apartment of M. Johan, the major-domo of the new chateau. The latter did not wait for him to announce himself.

"Ah! Ah! The man in a black mask," he exclaimed, in a benevolent and patronizing tone. "So, you are the famous Christian Waldo! Come along, my good fellow, I'll take you to your quarters myself, and you can make all your preparations at your leisure; you have a full hour yet."

Assistance was now given to transfer Christian's baggage to the room which was to serve him as a green-room, and at his request the keys were put into his hands. Then he shut himself up alone, and having removed his mask to be more at his ease, set to work to mount his theatre, though not without some rubbing of his shoulders. M. Stangstadius was not very heavy, but his deformed body was so singularly angular, that he felt as if he had been carrying a great bundle of crooked sticks.

He had been shown into a small saloon, in which there were two doors, one opening upon a passage leading to the private staircase by which Christian had just entered, escorted by the affable major-domo, and the other upon the end of a large and richly-decorated gallery, called the

Hunting-gallery, where Christian had met Margaret the night before. The theatre was to stand just within the gallery before this door (it was a large folding-door), and the spectators were to be accommodated within the gallery itself. Christian, upon measuring the width of the door-way, found that the theatre would just extend across it; so that when the whole was in order, he would be perfectly isolated from his audience, and quite at home in his little saloon. This arrangement, therefore, was an excellent one for securing his own freedom of movement, and his incognito, as well as that of M. Goeffe.

From the number of arm-chairs and other seats disposed in front of the theatre, Christian judged by a short estimate, without counting in detail, that his audience would consist of about a hundred persons conveniently seated, ladies probably—and of a hundred gentlemen, more or less of whom would have to stand behind them. The gallery was wide, and of unusual depth, so that it was, on the whole, the most convenient place in which Christian had ever exhibited. The vaulted and frescoed ceiling made its acoustic properties perfect; the chandeliers, which were already burning, gave an excellent light, and by merely lighting up the wings of the portable theatre, the dimensions of its little stage assumed exactly the appearance of depth which it required.

Christian made all his preparations with the most critical care. He was really fond of his little theatre, and had adapted to it a number of ingenious contrivances which made it something like a miniature of a real theatre. He would, in fact, have been successful as a painter of interiors and of landscape, if the love of the natural sciences had not occasioned him to confine himself mostly to mere decorative work; but his natural gifts were so good, that he could scarcely execute even work intrinsically frivolous, without giving it the distinct impress of his own graceful and tasteful originality. His little scenes were accordingly fresh and charming in design, and always produced an agreeable effect. He took the greatest pains with them, especially when he was going to exhibit before an intelligent audience; and

if he occasionally felt impatient at having to spend so much time over such details, he consoled himself by recalling the favorite axiom of Goffredi: "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing as well as possible, even if it is only whittling toothpicks."

Christian, therefore, was completely absorbed in making his preparations. Having cast a precautionary glance around the deserted gallery, he set up the frame of his theatre experimentally in the door-way with all the scenery and lights, and, stepping out into the audience-room, he seated himself in the best place to judge of the effect of his perspective, so that he might adjust properly the entrances and movements of his actors.

The two or three minutes' rest thus obtained was very welcome to him. He was more or less hardened to the extremes of all climates, but he found that in the overheated rooms of the houses of the north, he quickly felt fatigued. He had slept the night before only a few hours, in his arm-chair; and either from the exhausting experiences of the day, or from his walk on the ice with a professor of geology on his shoulders, he was overtaken by a sudden and irresistible drowsiness, and sank into one of those brief naps, in which the transition from the world of reality to dream-land is so sudden as to be imperceptible. He seemed to be in a garden, on a warm summer's day, and to hear the sand in one of the paths near him crackling under a stealthy tread. Some one was cautiously approaching; and although he could not see the person, he felt an intuitive certainty that it was Margaret. He awoke without being startled, on feeling what seemed to be a breath stirring in his hair. Quickly recovering himself, he jumped up and found that his mask had fallen off and lay at his feet. He stooped to pick it up, without turning round to see who had wakened him, and was startled in good earnest, when a man's voice, only too well known to him, remarked:

"It is perfectly useless to hide your face, Christian Waldo; I have recognized you. You are Christian Goffredi."

Christian, astonished, turned, and saw standing before

him, in good condition, well-dressed, and fresh shaved, no other than Guido Massarelli.

"What! Is this you?" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here, when you ought to be dangling at the end of a rope, at the meeting of four cross-roads, in some wood."

"I am one of the household," said Guido, smiling calmly and disdainfully.

"You one of the baron's household? Ah, to be sure! It does not surprise me. After being a swindler, and a highway robber, what remained except for you to become a lackey?"

"I am not a lackey," replied Massarelli, with the same composure; "I am a friend of the family. Quite an intimate friend, Christian, and you would do well, moreover, to try and be on good terms with me. It would be the greatest piece of good fortune that could befall you."

"Master Guido," said Christian, as he moved his theatre back into the inner saloon, "it is unnecessary to have an explanation now; but I am glad to know that you are staying here, where I shall be able to find you."

"Is that a threat, Christian?"

"No, it is a promise. I am in your debt, as you know very well, my dear friend, and as soon as I have paid off my indebtedness here—that will be done as soon as I have given an exhibition of marionettes an hour from this time—I shall make it my business to settle my account with you, by giving you the very best flogging you ever had in your life."

While speaking, Christian passed back into the green-room, and began putting out his lights and dropping his curtain. Massarelli followed, closing the doors of the gallery as he did so; and Christian, whose back was necessarily turned towards him at that moment, said to himself that this bandit would be very likely to make use of his advantage to try and assassinate him. Still, he despised him too much to show any distrust, and he went on threatening him with a severe chastisement for his crimes, in a tone as calm as that assumed by the rascal

himself. Fortunately for the imprudent Christian, Guido was by no means a courageous man, and kept his distance, ready to retreat in case his adversary should seem disposed to make a present payment on account.

"Come, Christian," he began again, when he supposed the young man might have given vent to his first outbreak of resentment, "let us have a reasonable conversation before proceeding to extremities. I am perfectly ready to give you satisfaction for all my transactions with you, and you have no right to insult with idle words a man whom you know you cannot terrify."

"What a pitiful fellow you are!" said Christian, beginning to be angry, and walking straight up to him. "Satisfaction from you, you prince of cowards? Oh no, Guido! the way to do with a fellow like you is to slap him in the face, and, if he resists, to beat him like a dog: nobody ever fights with him; you must know that. So drop your high tone, you scoundrel, and don't dare look me in the face! Down with you, on your knees, before me, or I'll strike you this very moment!"

Guido, as pale as death, fell on his knees without a word, while great tears, either of fear, or shame, or rage, rolled down his cheeks.

"Very good," said Christian, half in disgust and half in pity; "now get up and go. I pardon you, but never voluntarily cross my path again; and if we chance to meet, no matter where, don't venture to speak to me. For me, you are dead. Out with you, lackey! This room is mine for two or three hours."

"Christian," cried Guido, rising, and speaking with a vehemence affected or sincere, as the case may be, "hear me for only five minutes."

"No."

"Christian, listen to me!" persisted the bandit, stepping before the door of the staircase, which Christian was about to throw open; "I have something of importance to tell you—something upon which your fortune and your life depend."

"My fortune," said Christian, laughing contemptuously, "went into your pocket, you thief! It was so little

that I don't care much about it, either way. And as to my life, try and take it, if you think best."

"It has been in my hands, Christian," said Guido, who, as soon as he was assured of his enemy's generosity, had recovered all his assurance; "possibly it may be so again. You had outraged me, and I was strongly tempted by opportunity to revenge myself; but I could not forget that I had once loved you; and even now, in spite of your additional insults, it only depends upon you to have me love you as much as ever."

"Many thanks," replied Christian, shrugging his shoulders; "come, away with you! I have no time to listen to your pathetic drivelling; I have known it by heart this long time."

"I'm not so guilty as you think, Christian. When I robbed you in the Carpathians it was out of my power to do otherwise."

"That is just what everybody says who has surrendered himself to the devil."

"I had surrendered myself to the devil, it is very true, for I was the chief of a band of robbers. My comrades had marked you out for a victim; their eyes were upon us, and, if I had not taken good care to drug you, so as to prevent a useless resistance, they would have killed you."

"Then I am under obligations to you. Is that what you are driving at?"

"That is it, exactly. I am now in a fair way to make my fortune. Even to-morrow I shall be in a position to restore all that I took from you — forced to do so by men whom I could not control as I wished. A few days later they robbed me myself, and left me in exactly the same case in which you were left."

"They did quite right. You richly deserved it."

"Christian, do you remember the amount that was taken from you?"

"Perfectly."

"And shall you be at Stollborg to-morrow?"

"I don't know. It does not concern you, either."

"As you please. But to-morrow I shall bring you the money."

"Spare yourself the trouble. I am at home at Stollborg, and *I do not receive.*"

"But yet —"

"Silence! I have heard you long enough."

"But if I bring you the money —"

"The same sum that you took from me? No, I presume not! You drank that out a long time ago. Well, then, as the money you speak of can't be the same, and as it must be the proceeds of some theft, or of something worse, if possible, I don't want it. Please to take that for granted, and don't trouble yourself with any more talk about restitution. I am not fool enough to believe you, and if I did, I should promise you just as faithfully as I now do, to throw the price of your vile exploits into your face."

Christian was on the point of thrusting Guido out, but the latter yielded at last, and went. The exhibitor was about to close the door again, when M. Goefle, all covered up in furs, appeared, ascending the stairs, manuscript in hand. The lawyer had either eaten very quickly, or not at all; he had devoured the play, which he rapidly mastered, and, fearing that he would not have time enough to rehearse, had hurried over from Stollborg on foot, by the light of the stars. He had concealed his face and disguised his voice, in order to inquire for Christian Waldo's room; and, in short, had used all the precautions of a young lover stealing to a mysterious rendezvous. His head, for the present, was full of nothing but the *burattini*; he had forgotten the mysteries of Stollborg as completely as if he had never troubled himself on the subject. However, as he was running lightly up the stairs, he found himself, for the second time that day, obliged to pass a man of evil countenance, who was rapidly descending. This second meeting brought back to his mind the strange fancies in which he had been indulging about Baron Olaus, Stenson, and the deceased Hilda.

"Stay," he said to Christian, who gayly congratulated

him on his zeal; "look at that man who just passed me, and who is now going along the corridor below. Did he come from this room? Is he a servant of the baron's? Do you know him?"

"I know him a great deal too well, and I was just under the necessity of telling him my opinion of him," said Christian. "That man — whether a servant or not — is the very Guido Massarelli whose adventures I told you something about this morning, in relating my story."

"You don't say so! Well, that is a strange encounter, on my word!" cried M. Goefle; "and it may, perhaps, give you some trouble. You are enemies, and, if you have treated him as he deserves, he will injure you as much as possible."

"How can he injure me? He is such a coward! I made him go down on his knees to me."

"In that case — well, I don't know what he will do, but it is a fact that he has discovered some important secret."

"A secret concerning me?"

"No," said M. Goefle, who was on the point of speaking freely, when he remembered his resolution not to reveal anything relating to Stenson; "but, at any rate, you are hiding Christian Goffredi under the mask of Christian Waldo, and he will betray you."

"What if he does? I have not dishonored the name of Goffredi, and I hope the time will come when my singular adventures will redound to my honor, rather than to my discredit. Pray what have I to fear from any one's opinion? Am I either idle or debauched? I despise all the Massarellis in the world! Have I not already made even a chivalric reputation in Sweden and elsewhere, under my buffoon's mask? More good actions are attributed to me, indeed, than I have performed, and I have become a sort of hero of romance. Was I not last night the Prince Royal of Sweden? And if this reputation of mine should become too fantastic, cannot I change my name whenever I shall think proper, and adopt a serious profession? It is important upon your account (and that is the only reason I give it a thought, M. Goefle) to prevent your pretended nephew, who attended

the ball last night, from being recognized under the mask of Christian Waldo; but this is the only thing we need trouble ourselves about. Now Massarelli was not here, last night, I am sure of it, and he knows nothing about that adventure; otherwise I should have heard of it. However, in any event, you will only need to repeat what is the truth, and adhere to it, that you have never had either nephew or natural child, and that you are in no way responsible for the practical jokes of a professional jester like Christian Waldo."

"After all, I am as indifferent upon the subject as yourself," replied M. Goeffe, taking off his wig, and covering his head with a light black cap which Christian gave him; "do you suppose I am such a coward as to be afraid of the ogre of this castle? Christian, I am about to make my first appearance as an exhibitor of marionettes. Well, if you should ever be reproached with having earned your living as a showman, so as to devote yourself to science, you can reply that you knew a man holding an honorable position in a dignified profession, who became your fellow-performer for his own amusement."

"Or rather out of kindness to me, Monsieur Goeffe."

"Kindness for you, if you choose, for I really like you; but it would be wrong to suppose that I feel any distaste for this performance. On the contrary, it seems to me that it will be immensely diverting. In the first place the piece is charming, comic to the highest degree, and at the same time pathetic, in certain parts. You showed your wisdom in avoiding all allusions in the present arrangement. Come, Christian, let us rehearse! We haven't more than half an hour. Let's be quick! Are we all safe here? Can no one either hear us or see us?"

Christian had some difficulty in preventing M. Goeffe from fatiguing his voice and exhausting himself in the rehearsal. The successive scenes were briefly indicated upon the schedule, and two or three questions and replies devoted to each of them were quite sufficient to give full command of the principal situations, which were to be the basis of the public improvisation. What was most

important was to lay the marionettes in the proper order on the platform behind the scenes arranged for the purpose, so as to find them without confusion, when they should be required on the stage; to bring them forward correctly in their turns; and to have a good understanding about their entries and exits, and the main tenor of the story. The dialogue itself they left to the inspiration of the moment. M. Goefle was the most delightful and intelligent associate Christian had ever had. He was quite electrified by the collision of their wits, and, when eight o'clock struck, he was in a brilliant flow of spirits, such as he had not experienced since playing with Massarelli, then so agreeable and attractive. That distant and now sadly faded remembrance caused him a moment's melancholy, which, however, he quickly shook off as he remarked to M. Goefle:-

"There, I hear them coming into the gallery. Be all ready, my dear comrade, and good luck to us!"

At this moment some one knocked at the further door, and the voice of Johan, the major-domo, asked for Christian Waldo.

"I beg pardon," called out Christian, "but you can't come in now. Speak through the door; I can hear."

Johan answered that Christian was to be in readiness to open the performance; and that three raps on the door would notify him when to begin. At that signal the door would be opened to allow the theatre to be set forward.

This being agreed upon, still another quarter of an hour had to pass before the ladies could all be suited with seats, where their dresses and graces could be properly displayed, and where each should be near the cavalier most agreeable to herself, or to whom she most wished to be agreeable. Christian, who was used to such delays, busied himself with arranging the refreshments that he had found in the little saloon upon a table, where it would be conveniently at hand, in case he or his companion should want to clear their voices between the acts. When he had done this, both he and M. Goefle stepped into the theatre, which was covered in with curtains securely fastened in front and at the sides. The back, which was

movable, was set far enough to the rear to allow room for several side-scenes.

The two operators now awaited the three raps, Christian calmly, M. Goeffe with an almost feverish impatience, which he expressed openly.

"What, do you feel vexed?" said Christian. "Well, that shows that you are excited; it is a good sign. You will be brilliant."

"I hope so," replied the lawyer; "though, to tell you the truth, it seems to me just now as if I should not be able to say a single word, and should break down. That would be extremely agreeable; it makes me dizzy to think of it. No case that I ever argued before the most august assembly, no question involving the life and honor of a client, or my own success, ever agitated my mind and strained my nerves as this farce is doing. Will those chatterboxes of women that I hear cackling through the doors never be quiet? Do they want to smother us in this box? I'll break out and abuse them if this continues."

Finally the three blows were struck. Two footmen, stationed in the gallery, opened simultaneously the two sides of the door, and the little theatre was seen to move forward lightly, as if of its own accord, and to take its place before the door-way, which it entirely filled. Four musicians, whom Christian had stipulated for, played a brief quartette in the Italian style. The curtain rose, and the applause which was given to the scenery afforded the operators time to place their marionettes in position for appearing upon the stage.

Christian never began his performances without inspecting his audience through a little peep-hole, which he had contrived for the purpose. The first person he saw happened to be the very one he was looking for. Margaret was seated next Olga, in the front row. She was in a delicious toilet, and looked positively ravishing. Christian next noticed the baron, who was in the front row of the gentlemen's seats, behind those of the ladies, and whose lofty stature made him at once conspicuous. He was even paler, if possible, than the evening before. Masarelli did not seem to be present, but Christian saw with

pleasure Major Larrison, Lieutenant Erwin Osburn, and the other young officers who, on the previous evening, during the ball and after it, had shown him such cordial sympathy, and whose ruddy countenances, already lighted up with the expectation of pleasure, were full of kindly interest. At the same time, Christian could hear them praising the scene.

"Why, that is Stollborg!" said several voices.

"True," said Baron Olaus, in his metallic voice, "I really believe that they have tried to represent old Stollborg."

As for M. Goeffe, he could neither hear nor see; he was for the moment horribly discomposed. To give him time to recover himself, Christian began with a scene between two actors, which he played alone. His voice adapted itself with singular ease to the different utterances of the beings he was representing; and not only did he vary his intonations, he made each character, at the same time, use just the language which was best suited to its part and position in the little comedy. From the very outset the audience were charmed with his natural and truthful style. M. Goeffe, whose duty it was for the moment to represent an old man, very soon came in with his part. At first he did not succeed very well in disguising his voice, but the audience were so far from suspecting his presence, and were so thoroughly convinced that Christian did all the talking, that there was the greatest amazement at the infinite resources of the operator.

"Wouldn't you be willing to swear," said Larrison, "that there were a dozen persons in there?"

"There must be four, at least," said the lieutenant.

"No," replied the major, "there are only two, the master and his assistant. But the assistant is a mere brute, who very seldom speaks, and who has not opened his mouth, so far."

"But hark! there are two persons speaking. I distinctly hear two different voices."

"Pure delusion!" replied the enthusiastic Larrison; "it is Christian Waldo all alone. He can represent two or three or four persons all at the same time, and more too,

perhaps ; who knows ? He is the very devil. But attend to the piece ; it is wonderfully entertaining. One would like to commit his plays to memory, so as to write them out."

In spite of all this praise, however, we shall not undertake to enter into the details of this play for the reader's benefit. Such fugitive compositions are like all oral or musical improvisations ; it is a mistake to suppose that they would appear so well if transcribed and preserved. Their unexpectedness is a chief part of their attractiveness, and it is just because we can only recall them indistinctly, and that the imagination, therefore, has full opportunity to embellish them, that we remember them as so charming. Whatever Christian produced in these extempore efforts had always spirit, character, and taste. And as for the imperfections inseparable from an impromptu recitation, the rapid movement of the piece, and the artist's adroitness in introducing new characters as soon as he found himself growing weary of those already upon the stage, caused them to be entirely overlooked.

As for M. Goeffe, his genuine natural eloquence, his ready wit, when excited, and extensive and varied information, made it very easy for him to do his part, when he had once recovered from his fright. His promptness in seizing any fancy of his interlocutor, and making the most of it, gave rise to the most entertaining digressions ; and the usual amazement at the variety and knowledge displayed in Waldo's dialogue, was greater than ever.

Although declining to enter into the particulars of Christian's comedy, we must at least explain how it was he had changed the first act ; with which, in its original form, M. Goeffe, it will be remembered, had been so deeply impressed.

Restrained by the fear of really compromising the advocate by some unintentional allusion, he had made the villain of the piece a comic character, a sort of Casandre, deceived by his ward, and constantly seeking the *corpus delicti* — the Child of Mystery — but without any criminal designs against him. Christian was very much

surprised, therefore, as he began the last scene of the first act, to hear a movement in the audience, as if a sort of shudder had passed over it, and a general whispering, which, to his practised ear, skilled in detecting the sentiments of his spectators, even while he himself was speaking, seemed to express blame rather than praise.

"What can have happened?" he asked himself.

Glancing at M. Goeffe, he saw that he looked troubled, and was tapping the floor with one foot, as if vexed, while he moved his marionette nervously about upon the stage.

Christian, imagining that he had forgotten some part of the plot, hastened to relieve him by bringing forward the boatman, and, hurrying up the conclusion of the act, he lowered the curtain. This was followed neither by applause nor hisses, but there was a general rush in the audience, as if they were hurrying out, to avoid hearing anything further. Peeping through his eye-hole, before withdrawing the theatre behind the door for the intermission, he saw, in fact, that his whole audience, although not yet dispersed, had risen; and, with their backs turned towards the theatre, were discussing some event in low voices. The only words he could distinguish were: "*Gone out! He has gone out!*" And glancing round the room to see who could be meant, he saw that the baron was no longer in the gallery.

"Come," said M. Goeffe, nudging him with his elbow, "let's move back into the green-room. Why are you waiting? It's the intermission."

The theatre, therefore, rolled back within the saloon, the doors were closed; and as he rapidly shifted his scenes for the second act, Christian asked M. Goeffe if he had noticed anything in particular.

"The deuce!" said the lawyer, with a good deal of excitement; "I have done it finely this time! What do you say?"

"Your performance? It was excellent, M. Goeffe."

"I was stupid, crazy! It is inconceivable that a man accustomed to speak in public on the most delicate subjects, and about the most involved and doubtful

cases, should have been overtaken by such an accident! Can you understand it?"

"But what accident, for heaven's sake, Monsieur Goefle?"

"What, are you deaf? Did you not hear me make three most frightful blunders?"

"Pshaw! I probably made a hundred; it happens every day. Nobody notices them."

"You think so? Nobody notices them? I'll wager something that the baron left the room before we were through."

"He did, that's the fact! Is he so very critical that a careless connective or an ill-chosen word—"

"What! A thousand devils! That is not the matter at all! I would rather have had my tongue cut out than to have said what I did. While you were stooping down to bring the boat under the rocks, and I was making the men on guard talk, only imagine that I said three times, 'the baron,' instead of 'Don Sancho'! I did, three times! Once by mere oversight, again when I had noticed it, and meant to correct myself; and a third time—I never heard of such a thing, Christian—to say exactly the very word that one intends not to say! There was some fatality about it; I am almost ready to believe, as our peasants do, that evil spirits intermeddle with our doings!"

"It is very curious, really," said Christian, "but it might have happened to any one. Why are you so much annoyed about it, M. Goefle? The baron can never suspect that it was done on purpose. And besides, is he the only baron in the world? Are there not a dozen of them, perhaps, in the very audience before us? Come, let us attend to the second act; time is passing, and they may call for us at any moment."

"If they don't send to countermand the performance. There, some one is knocking!"

"It is the major-domo again. Step in under the frame, M. Goefle; I will put on my mask and open the door; he must see what is going on."

When M. Goefle was out of sight, and Christian masked, the door was opened to M. Johan.

"What is the matter?" asked Christian, going promptly to the point. "Shall we go on?"

"Why not, M. Waldo?" said the major-domo.

"I fancied that his lordship was indisposed."

"Oh, he often suffers from nervousness, when he remains long in one place. It is nothing, however. He has just sent me to tell you that you are to go on whether he returns or not; he would regret to have the company disappointed of their entertainment. But what an odd idea that was of yours, M. Christian, to represent our old Stollborg in your theatre!"

"I hoped it might please his lordship the baron," said Christian, with effrontery. "Was I mistaken?"

"His lordship is enchanted with the idea: he said over and over, 'Capital! How good it is! You would think it was the old donjon itself.'"

"I'm very glad indeed," returned Christian: "in that case we'll continue. Your servant, M. Major-domo! Come, M. Goefle, take courage," he said, when Johan had gone; "you see it's all correct, and that we have been only dreaming all day. Now I wager that the baron is the best fellow in the world, you will see that he will be converted, and we shall have to canonize him."

The baron concluded to return, after all, and the second act, which was short and lively, seemed to amuse him extremely. Don Sancho did not appear. M. Goefle made no more slips of the tongue, and succeeded so well in disguising his voice, that nobody suspected his presence. In the next intermission he drank sundry glasses of port to keep up his spirits, and during the third and last act, which was even more successful than the two preceding ones, he was, perhaps, a little elevated.

The comic scenes in which Stentarello entertained the public, Christian varied with a sentimental by-plot between other characters. In the last act, Alouzo, the child of the lake, discovered that Rosita, the daughter of the worthy couple who had adopted and brought him up,

was not his sister, whereupon he avowed his love to her. This well-known dramatic situation is always a delicate one to manage. There is something unwelcome in seeing a brother pass suddenly from a sacred friendship to a passion which, in spite of the change of circumstances, persists, as it were, in seeming unholy. This young girl and Alonzo were the only two of his characters whom Christian had not burlesqued. He had represented the latter as a good-hearted young man, with views and pursuits like his own. The audience felt a sympathy for his generous and adventurous qualities, and the ladies, quite forgetting that it was only a marionette which they beheld, were charmed with the pleasant voice which discoursed to them of love with a certain chaste tenderness, and in a frank tone, far different from the mannerisms of the fashionable French pastorals of the day.

Christian was familiar with Marivaux, whose works present such a striking union of elaborate thought, with simplicity of feeling and passionate emotion. He had been deeply penetrated with all that is true and great in this charming genius, and he really excelled in representing the part of a lover. The scene was too short. It was encored vehemently, and Christian, yielding to the wish of the public, picked up Alonzo again — he had already pulled him off his fingers — and brought him back upon the stage in a manner at once ingenious and natural.

“Did you call me?” he said to the young girl, and this simple phrase was uttered with an expression so timid, so profoundly loving, and so heartfelt, that Margaret hid her face behind her hand, to conceal a deep blush.

The fact is, that the young girl was passing through a strange experience. Out of all the audience, she alone had recognized in the voice of Alonzo that of Christian Goefle; perhaps because she alone had conversed with him sufficiently to remember his voice distinctly. It is true that Christian Waldo made his young lover talk in a higher key than his own natural intonation, but still there were certain inflections and vibrations that startled Margaret every moment. When the love scene came, she was absolutely certain; and yet Christian Goefle had

not said a single word of love to her. She kept her thoughts to herself, however; and when Olga, who was cold and sarcastic, nudged her with her elbow, and asked if she was crying, the innocent child replied with artless hypocrisy that she had caught a bad cold, and was trying to smother her cough.

As for Olga, she, too, was dissimulating, though in a very different way. When the play was over, she pretended to feel a great contempt for the little gentleman, who was such a "bashful lover," and yet her heart had been beating violently. In fact, there are some Russian women who are habitually heartless and calculating, but who, nevertheless, have very ardent passions. Olga had resolutely committed herself to an interested marriage; and yet, in spite of herself, she could not help feeling a secret horror of the baron, ever since she had been engaged to him. When he spoke to her after the play, his harsh voice and icy look gave her a chill, and she remembered without, or even against her intention, the soft tones and vivid expressions of Christian Waldo.

Upon his side, the baron seemed to be in excellent humor. The unfortunate Don Sancho, who was to have made his appearance again towards the close of the piece, had prudently been suppressed by M. Goeffe. Between the first and second acts, he and Christian had agreed together as to this modification. They arranged to make Rosita the daughter of Don Sancho, who was supposed to have died during the intermission. She turned out to be the heiress of his vast fortune, and marries Alonzo at the end of the play, so as to make up for the spoliation which he had suffered. Adventures, blunders, romantic incidents, and comic scenes, and most of all Stentarello, with his ingenuous selfishness and his cowardice, filled out the slender framework of the little comedy, which was received with general enthusiasm, notwithstanding the dissent of M. Stangstadius, who did not listen to a single word, and pooh-poohed everything from beginning to end. He was quite out of patience to think that anybody could be interested in a frivolous affair in which there was nothing scientific.

Meanwhile, M. Goefle had thrown himself into an arm-chair in the green-room, where he was shut up with Christian; and while the latter, always active and industrious, busied himself with taking down, arranging, and folding all the different parts and implements of his theatre — packing the *dramatis personæ* into their box, and folding the theatre itself into one bundle, which, although heavy, could easily be carried — the advocate wiped the perspiration from his forehead, sipped his Spanish wine, and, in short, gave himself up, heart and soul, to enjoyment and relaxation, as he was in the habit of doing at home when he took off his professional robe and cap, to retire, as he was accustomed to phrase it, into the bosom of private life.

This charming man had experienced few disappointments in public life, and few private troubles. What he had really felt the want of, since he had settled down to the sober, tranquil career of a middle-aged man, was novelty, the element of adventure. This he pretended to hate, and thought he did hate it; and yet he suffered from the monotony of his existence, because he possessed a vivid imagination, and great versatility of talent. Naturally, therefore, at the present moment, he was in unusually high spirits, without knowing why. Although fatigued, and bathed in perspiration, he was sorry that the play was over; for at least ten additional acts, ready for performance, were floating in his mind.

"I ought to be ashamed of myself," he said; "here am I resting, while you are hard at work setting things to rights. Cannot I help you?"

"No, no, M. Goefle, you would not know how. Besides, I have done already. Are you still too warm to think of walking back to Stollborg?"

"To Stollborg! Must we return there, and go off stupidly to bed, excited as we are?"

"Why, as to that, M. Goefle, it rests with you to step out of the door at the foot of this side stairway, and then go round to the main entrance and take supper (they have just rung the bell), and enjoy the amusements which, I presume, have been prepared for the remainder of the

evening. But my part is played. Since you have denied your own blood, since I can no longer appear by your side under the name of Christian Goefle, I must go and take something or other to eat, and study a little mineralogy until I grow sleepy."

"Sure enough, my poor boy, you must be tired."

"I was before we began; now I am excited, just as you are, M. Goefle. In improvising, one is always most wound up when it is time to stop. Exactly when the curtain falls is just the right time to begin; you are full of fire, of feeling, of wit."

"Very true, and I'll stay with you for that reason, for you would be uncomfortable enough by yourself. I understand all about that state of mind. It is just so when one has concluded an argument; but this is even more stimulating. I would like myself to do I don't know what, this very minute: recite a tragedy, compose a poem, set the house on fire, get drunk — anything to satisfy this craving of the mind after something out of the ordinary line."

"Take care, M. Goefle," said Christian, laughing, "the last may happen to you."

"To me? Never! never! I am sorry to say that I am sober to excess — stupidly so, in fact."

"But see there — that bottle is half empty!"

"Half a bottle of port for two — there is nothing scandalous in that, I hope?"

"I beg your pardon, but I haven't touched it. I drank nothing but lemonade."

"If that is so," said M. Goefle, pushing away the glass he was about to fill, "hence, perfidious beverage! To get tipsy alone is the most melancholy business in the world. Will you come over to Stollborg and drink with me? Or — stay, when I was here this morning I heard somebody saying that there was to be a race by torchlight on the lake to-night, unless there should be more snow; but, on the contrary, the weather was magnificent when I came over. Let us join the party. Every one is privileged, you know, to appear disguised during the Christ-

mas entertainments, and faith ! I remember this moment that Countess Elveda said something about a masquerade."

"A good idea," said Christian, "and exactly in my line — the man in the mask ! But what shall we do for costumes ? I have a hundred or more there in my box, but neither of us could very well bring himself down to the size of a marionette."

"Oh; perhaps we can find something over at Stollborg."

"Not in my wardrobe then, most assuredly."

"Well, in mine, perhaps. If we can't do anything else, we can put on our clothes wrong side out. But a little imagination —"

"Very well ! Go on, then, M. Goeffe, I will follow you. I have still to load up Jean and receive my money. Take this mask ; I have another. Possibly there may be some inquisitive fellows on the stairs."

"Or some inquisitive ladies — on your account. Be quick, Christian ! I'll go on in advance."

And M. Goeffe, as springy and active as if but twenty years old, darted down stairs, pushing his way past the servants, and even jostling certain ladies, very carefully wrapped up, who had quietly crept in to try and see the famous Christian Waldo as he should pass. Christian himself, consequently, attracted no attention at all, and met comparatively few persons, when a moment afterwards he followed, carrying his box and his great bundle.

"That must be the assistant," they said, "since he's carrying the things. He must needs wear a mask too, the booby !"

And they lamented their ill-success in failing to catch the least glimpse of the face or even of the figure of Waldo himself, who had shot off like lightning.

When Christian had finished loading his ass, he returned to the green-room, and had scarcely entered it when M. Johan made an effort to take him by surprise, so as to satisfy his curiosity about him. The major-domo tried the door stealthily, hoping to enter without knocking, on the pretext of paying the amount due for the exhibition. Christian, conjecturing who his visitor was, resolved to have a little amusement at the expense of this insinuating

gentleman. Accordingly, he masked himself carefully, and, leaving but one candle burning, opened the door, which he had not forgotten to lock, with a great deal of politeness.

"Have I the pleasure of speaking with M. Christian Waldo himself?" asked the major-domo, as he handed him the sum agreed on.

"The same!" said Christian; "you must surely remember my voice and dress, since you saw me only a little while ago."

"Certainly, my dear fellow, but your assistant masks himself too, it seems; he passed me a while ago on the stairs, looking as mysterious as yourself, and wrapped up in much better style, by George! than he was yesterday, when you arrived."

"The fact is that the rascal, instead of carrying my cloak on his arm, takes the liberty of putting it on his back. I let him do it, for he is a chilly sort of fellow."

"Ah, indeed! Well, there is one thing about this chilly fellow that surprises me greatly. That is, that yesterday he was a full head shorter than you."

"Does that surprise you?" said Christian, drawing on his powers of improvisation; "then you cannot have noticed his feet to-day."

"Why no, really. Was he on stilts?"

"Not exactly, but on pattens four or five inches high."

"But what for?"

"Why, M. Major-domo! How can a man as intelligent as yourself ask such a question as that?"

"I confess I don't understand it," said Johan, biting his lips.

"Well, then, M. Major-domo, you will easily see that if the two operators in a theatre like mine are not pretty nearly of the same height, one of them would have to let his head appear, which would not produce a good effect among the *burattini*, but would rather look as if an inhabitant of Saturn had come amongst them; or else the other, the shorter of the two, would have to stretch his arms up so high, that he could not endure the fatigue through two scenes."

"Then your assistant wears pattens to bring him up to your height! Upon my word that's very ingenious!" And Johan added, with a sceptical air:

"It's singular that I did not hear the noise of those pattens, when he was going down stairs a while ago."

"There again, M. Major-domo, your natural shrewdness seems to be slumbering! If those pattens were not well shod with felt they would make an insupportable clattering in the theatre."

"Oh, that's the reason, is it? But you don't explain to me how it is that this fellow, vulgar and stupid as he is, can support you so brilliantly?"

"It can't be explained," answered Christian; "but, nevertheless, it is almost always the way with an artist. He shines on the stage—or I should say, in this case, under the stage—but once outside the theatre, he turns dark again, particularly if he happens to have the bad habit of drinking with the servants in the families where he may happen to stop."

"What! Do you imagine that he has been drinking here with—"

"With some of your footmen. They must have given you a report of his interesting conversation, M. Major-domo, since you are so well informed about the low grade of his intelligence."

Johan bit his lips again; and Christian felt convinced either that Puffo, in his drunkenness, had betrayed his incognito in a measure, or that Massarelli, for a sum of money, had done so without any reserve.

The only name that Puffo knew him by was Dulac, but Massarelli had known him under all his successive names, except, perhaps, that of Christian Goefle, so recently improvised. Christian tried to conjecture how this might be, while observing closely the major-domo's evident and keen desire to see his face. He soon came to the conclusion that he was not so curious to satisfy his doubts as to his death's head, as to ascertain whether or not the performer was one and the same person with M. Goefle's pretended nephew, whose face the major-domo had seen plainly the evening before.

"Come, confess," the latter said at last, after many insidious questions, to all of which the adventurer had replied very guardedly; "if some agreeable lady—a charming young person—say the Countess Margaret, for instance, should ask to see your face, would you be equally obstinate in refusing?"

"Who is the Countess Margaret?" asked Christian, in the most innocent manner in the world, though he felt a great inclination to give M. Johan a box on the ear.

"*Mon Dieu!*" rejoined the major-domo, "I mentioned her because she is by all odds the most beautiful woman in the chateau at the present time. Did you not see her?"

"Pray where could I have seen her?"

"In the front row of ladies."

"Why! do you suppose that when I am playing a piece with twenty actors in it, almost entirely alone; I have time to look at the women?—"

"I don't say that, but really now, would you not like to please a beautiful young lady?"

"To please her? M. Johan," exclaimed Christian, with well-affected emotion, "without meaning it, you are asking me a very painful question. You do not seem to know that nature has been pleased to make me frightfully ugly, and that my unfortunate appearance is my only reason for taking so much pains to conceal myself."

"It is so reported," replied Johan, "but the contrary is also asserted; and his lordship, as well as all the company, and the ladies particularly, are extremely anxious to know what they are to believe."

"I certainly could not subject myself to the pain of gratifying such a misplaced desire as that. I prefer to supply you with evidence which will enable you to dissuade them."

As he spoke, Christian, relying upon the dim light which he had provided, lifted his black silk mask, and, as it were precipitately, and with a kind of desperate effort, suffered the major-domo to behold, for a moment, a second mask of waxed cloth, so skilfully made that it bore every resemblance to an actual human face; without close examination by a strong light, no one would have suspected

the cheat. And what a face was thus disclosed — flat-nosed, sallow, and horribly blemished by a great wine-colored birth-mark! Johan, in spite of his suspicious nature, was deceived, and could not refrain from an exclamation of disgust.

“I really beg your pardon, my dear friend,” he exclaimed, recovering himself, “you are much to be pitied; and yet, your talent and your wit are advantages which I envy you.”

The major-domo was himself so ugly that Christian could scarcely refrain from bursting into a laugh at the idea that he should consider himself so much handsomer than the mask.

“And now,” he said, after replacing the black mask, “tell me frankly why you were so anxious to know the extent of my ugliness.”

“*Mon Dieu!*” exclaimed Johan, after a moment’s hesitation, assuming a confiding air, “I’ll tell you. And, by the way, if you would help me to find out a certain secret — a foolish joke which more than one person here is interested in discovering, you would confer a great obligation — you know what I mean — an obligation that would be munificently rewarded by the master of the house. It’s a mere piece of pleasantry; there’s a bet about it.”

“I would like nothing better,” answered Christian, curious to hear the communication, whose nature, however, he anticipated; “what is it?”

“You are lodging at Stollborg, are you not?”

“Yes; you would not take me in here.”

“Where did you sleep — in the bear-room?”

“I did, and capitally too.”

“Capitally, did you? The ghost they talk about —”

“It is not about a ghost that you want to question me. You don’t believe in them any more than I do.”

“True; but there was a strange apparition here at the ball, whom nobody knew. This you might have met at Stollborg.”

“No, I have seen no apparition.”

"But when I say an apparition — Did you not see a lawyer there, one M. Goeffe, a very able man?"

"Yes; I had the honor of conversing with him this morning. He occupies the room there with two beds in it."

"With his nephew?"

"I saw nothing of any nephew."

"Nephew or not, a young man of about your height, whose voice I did not notice particularly, but with a very agreeable face, dressed in a black suit throughout — a very good-looking young fellow —"

"Good-looking? I wish to heaven it could have been myself, M. Johan! But I was so very sleepy that I should hardly have known it even if he had been there. I only saw a drunken fellow whom they call Ulphilas."

"And did M. Goeffe see nothing of this stranger?"

"I don't think he did."

"Did he know nothing of him?"

"Ah! that reminds me — yes, I recollect. I heard M. Goeffe complaining about some person who had made use of his name to attend the ball. Is that it?"

"Exactly."

"But, M. Major-domo, if you were so puzzled about this unknown, why didn't you have him followed?"

"We were not puzzled at the time. He had given himself out for a near relative of the advocate, and, as a matter of course, we expected to see him again. It was only this morning, when the lawyer had disavowed him, that the baron thought of inquiring who the unknown could be, who, under a feigned name, had ventured to introduce himself into the house. No doubt it was some impertinent fellow who had laid a wager about it; one of the students from the Falun Mining-school, perhaps — unless, indeed, he really should be a natural son of the advocate — as he himself, it seems, intimated — whom his father, however, does not permit to assume his name."

"All that seems to me hardly worth the trouble of so much inquiry," observed Christian, with an air of indifference. "Will you allow me now, M. Major-domo, to go and have some supper?"

"Yes, by all means. You shall come and take supper with me."

"No, thank you. I am very much fatigued; I must beg you to excuse me."

"So you insist on going back to Stollborg. You must be very poorly accommodated there."

"Very well, on the contrary."

"But have you a bed, even?"

"I am to have one to night."

"Does that drunken Ulphilas provide you a decent table?"

"It could not be better."

"Will you repeat your performance for us to-morrow?"

"At what time?"

"The same as this evening."

"With great pleasure. Your obedient servant!"

"Ah, a single word, M. Waldo. Would it be an indiscretion to inquire what is your real name?"

"By no means, M. Johan. My real name is Stentarello, very much at your service."

"You are a wag. I suppose it is you who always play that part in a comedy?"

"Always, except when it is my assistant."

"You are mysterious!"

"Certainly, in matters that relate to the secrets of my theatre. Otherwise, I should have neither reputation nor success."

"Well, at any rate, will you allow me to inquire why you named one of your characters the baron?"

"Ah, as to that, you must ask the footman who made Puffo drunk. For my part, I am used to his blunders, and I should never have noticed it, if he had not told me about it himself, in a great fright."

"Had he perhaps picked up some foolish gossip or other?"

"About what? Will you be so good as to explain?"

"No, no, it is not worth the trouble," replied Johan, who saw—thanks to Christian's adroitness, or perhaps his carelessness—that their relative positions had be-

come inverted, and that he himself, instead of asking questions, was being compelled to answer them. But still he could not help returning to a subject to which he had already referred.

"So, then," he said, "it seems you have a scene so much like Stollborg as to be mistaken for it."

"I had one that happened to look a little like Stollborg, yes, it is true; but I completed the resemblance on purpose."

"Why?"

"Why, as I told you, by way of a compliment to the baron. I always make a point of representing some locality in the neighborhood wherever I may happen to be performing, so as to add to the attractiveness of my exhibitions. At my next stopping-place Stollborg will be changed again, and a new scene displayed. Did the baron think it poorly painted? No wonder, I had so very little time."

While talking, Christian had amused himself by studying the disagreeable countenance of Johan. He was a man of about fifty, rather stout, vulgar in manner, and with features whose expression seemed at first good-natured and apathetic. But even the night before, Christian, as he handed him the letter of invitation found in M. Goeffe's pocket, had detected a sort of inquisitorial watchfulness, veiled by an assumed indifference, in his oblique glance. He was still more struck at present by these indications of a false, hypocritical character—a sort of caricature, as it seemed, of his master's, the baron. Still, as Johan was nothing after all but an upper servant, without education or real finesse, Christian had no difficulty in playing a better comedy than he, and in effectually persuading him of the perfect innocence of his intentions. And in the meanwhile, for his own part, he obtained from the interview a quasi-certitude in regard to the story of Baroness Hilda. It seemed to him perfectly evident that a drama of some kind had been enacted at Stollborg, and that the baron had either been terrified or enraged at witnessing his per-

formance; since it had represented in dramatic form, no matter with what intention, this triple conjunction · a prison, a victim, and a jailer.

X.

AS for Johan, he was assuredly the baron's confidant, and perhaps had been one of the actors in this drama. He had tried to discover how far Christian Waldo, as a wandering story-teller, had become acquainted with the mystery; but Christian had adroitly insinuated that the servants of the chateau had been guilty of an indiscretion, and, for the present at least, had freed both himself and M. Goeffe from any supposed participation in the matter.

We will now leave Christian, who proceeded philosophically to drive the heavily-laden Jean from the new chateau, and revert to certain matters that had been occurring during his interview with the major-domo. Let us go back to the moment when M. Goeffe set out for Stollborg: the moon was rising, and the aurora borealis beginning to shine with renewed splendor, and lighted on his way by their combined effulgence, he walked rapidly across the lake, humming a tune, and every now and then unconsciously gesticulating.

By this time supper had been served to the guests at the new chateau, and the size and beauty of the splendid Christmas-cake, which, according to the Norwegian usage, was to remain uncut upon the table until the sixth of January, was attracting the admiration of the ladies. It was a masterpiece of confectionery; and, with due respect to the gallantry of the period as well as to the observances of a religious festival, it had been made to resemble the temple of Paphos. It was ornamented with monuments, trees, fountains, people and animals. The pastry-work, and crystallized sugar of all colors, imitated the most precious materials, and were elaborately wrought into the most fantastic forms.

The baron, on the plea of having important letters to read and answer, had intrusted the duty of doing the honors of the supper-table to an elderly single lady of his family, a person thoroughly accomplished in the duties of the mistress of the house, and a complete cipher in all other respects. The truth was, that the baron, who never lacked excuses for excluding himself when he happened to feel preoccupied, was, at the present moment, shut up in his private cabinet with a man with a pale face, who called himself Tebaldo, and who was no other than Guido Massarelli. Guido had not obtained this tête-à-tête without effort. Johan, who was very jealous of his master's confidence, had tried to extract his secret from him, so as to turn it to his own advantage; but Massarelli was not the man to be deceived in that way. He had insisted; and after waiting about the chateau for the whole day, he had at last succeeded in obtaining the interview, whose results he had anticipated, when he had boasted in advance to Christian that he was a friend of the family. The conversation, which was carried on in French, begun with a strange narrative, to which the baron listened with a sarcastic and contemptuous expression.

"You have made a very startling statement," he observed, at last, to Massarelli; "and I should even say, if I could believe what I have heard, a very important revelation. But I have so often been deceived in matters of a delicate nature, that I must insist on other proofs than mere verbal ones, before trusting you. The story you have related is strange, romantic, improbable—"

"And yet M. Stenson acknowledged its accuracy; he did not even attempt to deny it," replied the Italian.

"So you say," coldly answered the baron; "unfortunately, I am unable to corroborate your assertions. If I should interrogate Stenson, he would certainly deny it, whether it be true or imaginary."

"Very probably, your lordship. A man so capable of dissimulation as to have imposed upon you for twenty

years, will not be at a loss for a falsehood now ; but, if you will contrive to overhear a conversation between us, you can learn the truth. I will undertake to make him admit it again, and in your hearing, provided he has no suspicion of your presence."

"It would not be difficult, so deaf as he is, to introduce one's self into his premises ; but since, according to him, the person is dead, why need I concern myself about the past life of old Stenson? He must necessarily have acted in good faith ; and though he had done me a great wrong by keeping silence, and thus permitting odious suspicions to rest upon me, yet — since time has rectified former prejudices —"

"Not so entirely as your lordship seems to believe," observed the Italian, who was scarcely inferior to the baron himself in cool audacity. "The story is current throughout the country, and Christian Waldo must certainly have heard it on his way here."

"If that were the case," said the baron, with a look betraying his secret rage, "that juggler would never have dared introduce it in public, and before my very face, into a scene of his comedy."

"And yet one of his scenes did really represent the old donjon. I examined the locality to-day, and Christian Waldo, who is lodging at Stollborg, must certainly have done the same. The Italians — they are very bold fellows, your lordship, these Italians !"

"I see they are, M. Tebaldo. You say that this Waldo is lodging at Stollborg, and therefore must have painted this scene on purpose, and from nature. It is hardly probable that he could have done it so quickly. The resemblance between his decoration and the old tower must have been accidental."

"I think not, your lordship ; Waldo has great facility, and paints as rapidly as he improvises."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, your lordship."

"What is his real name?"

"That is what I proposed to communicate to you."

lordship, if the sum I have mentioned does not seem to you exorbitant."

"But what interest can I have in learning his real name?"

"An interest that is immense; *all important.*"

The emphasis with which the pretended Tebaldo pronounced these last words, seemed to make some impression on the baron.

"You say," he resumed, after a pause, "that the person referred to is dead?"

"Stenson affirms that it is so."

"And you?"

"I doubt it."

"Perhaps Christian Waldo knows?"

"He knows nothing at all about it."

"You are certain of that?"

"I am certain."

"But you are trying to give me to understand that this person is the same with—"

"I did not say that, your lordship."

"Then you are trying to say it and not to say it. You wish to be paid in advance for information probably chimerical."

"No, I have only demanded your lordship's signature, to be used in case you shall afterwards be satisfied with what you receive from me."

"I never give my signature. If any one doubts me, so much the worse for him."

"In that case, your lordship, I will carry my secret away with me again. He whom it concerns, at least as much as it does yourself, shall have it for nothing."

Tebaldo was going resolutely out of the cabinet, when the baron recalled him. These two men were both secretly agitated, and for a similar cause: they were afraid of each other. Before Guido had had time to lay his hand upon the knob of the door, he said to himself: "I am crazy; the baron will have me assassinated to secure my silence." Upon his side, the baron reflected: "Perhaps he has already spoken; he alone can tell me what I really have to fear."

"M. Tebaldo," said the baron, "suppose I should tell you that I have known him longer than you imagine?"

"I should be delighted on your account, your lordship," answered the Italian, with audacity.

"This person is not dead. He is here—or at least he was here yesterday. I saw him, and recognized him."

"Recognized him?" said Massarelli, with surprise.

"Yes, recognized. I know what I am saying. He called himself by the name of Goefle, either with or without the permission of a respectable gentleman of that name. You can therefore speak freely. You see that I am on the right track, and that it is simply puerile to endeavor to direct my suspicions upon this mountebank, Waldo."

The Italian, astonished, was silent. He had arrived only that morning, and knew nothing of what had passed the evening before. He had met M. Goefle, but without knowing who he was. He could not speak Swedish, and still less Daler-carlian; and had found no one to talk to except the major-domo, who could speak a little French, but was very distrustful. Accordingly he was perfectly ignorant of the appearance of Christian Goefle at the ball, and really did not know what the baron was speaking about. The latter, on seeing his surprise and discomfiture, imagined that he was confounded, by finding him already in possession of the truth.

"Come," he said, "speak out, and make an end of it. Tell me the whole. You may rely upon a recompense corresponding to the service which you may render me."

But the Italian had already recovered his assurance. Persuaded that the baron was on a false scent, and resolved not to surrender his secret for an inadequate recompense, his only thought at present was to gain time, and to escape from the clutches of this man who was reputed so terrible, and who might play him an ill turn in case of a peremptory refusal to explain himself.

"Is your lordship willing," he said, "to give me

twenty-four thousand crowns, and allow me twenty-four hours to place in your presence, and within your power, the person whom it is so much for your interest to know?"

"Twenty-four thousand crowns is little," replied the baron, ironically; "twenty-four hours is a great deal."

"It is but little, for a man who is alone."

"Are you in want of assistance? I have very adroit and trustworthy people in my employment."

"If I am to share the twenty-four thousand crowns with them, I would rather act alone, at my own risk and peril."

"But which is it that you propose to do?"

"Whatever your lordship shall direct."

"Indeed! You seem to be suggesting—"

At this moment, the baron was interrupted by a sort of scratching upon the outside of one of the doors of the cabinet.

"Wait here for me," he said to Massarelli, and went out into another room.

Guido now rapidly reviewed the situation. He was terrified by the baron's calmness, and began to think that correspondence would be a more prudent mode of transacting the business. Hoping to escape, he crossed the room, and tried the door by which he had entered. It was shut and latched by some secret device, which he could not detect, notwithstanding a certain degree of mechanical skill. He looked out of the window; it was eighty feet from the ground.

He noiselessly tried the door by which the baron had gone out; it was as close shut as the other. The desk stood open, and within it was visible a delectable assemblage of rouleaux of gold.

"Ah!" said Massarelli to himself, with a sigh; "the doors must needs be strong, and the locks good, if they trust me here alone with all those bright pieces."

His position began to seem to him serious, and even alarming. He listened, hoping to catch what was said in the next room, but could not distinguish a single word.

However, we shall take the liberty of reporting the conversation that was held there :

"Well, Johan," said the baron, "did you succeed? Did you see this Waldo's face?"

"Yes, your lordship. He is not yesterday's man; he is a monster."

"Worse looking than you?"

"I am a beauty compared with him."

"Did you have a good look at him?"

"As distinct as I have of you, at the present moment."

"Did you take him by surprise?"

"Not at all. I said I was curious to see him, and he was so obliging as to unmask."

"And how about the other, the false Goeffe?"

"No news."

"Very singular. Has nobody seen anything of him anywhere?"

"This Waldo did not meet him at Stollborg, and M. Goeffe knows nothing at all about him."

"Perhaps Ulphilas may have seen him?"

"Ulphilas declares that nobody has been at Stollborg but M. Goeffe, his domestic, and this frightful looking fellow, whom I just now saw myself."

"M. Goeffe has a domestic, has he? That is our unknown in disguise."

"It's a child of ten years old."

"Then I am quite at a loss."

"Has your lordship received any information from this Italian?"

"No; he is either a liar or a lunatic. But in any event, I must discover the incognito fellow who insulted me. You say he smoked and talked with Major Larrison and his friends?"

"Yes, in the lower saloon."

"Then those young men are hiding him; he is at the major's bostoelle!"

"I will have it watched. The major is not the man to keep a secret, with that careless way of his. He came here this morning, and has not been home to-day. His lieutenant—"

"Is an ass! But these young people hate me."

"What have you to fear from this unknown?"

"Everything, and nothing. What do you think of this Tebaldo?"

"A blackguard."

"Then we must not let go of him. You understand?"

"Perfectly."

"How far are they with supper?"

"The dessert will be served shortly."

"I must go and show myself. Give orders to get out my handsomest sleigh and the best four-horse team."

"Do you join the race on the lake?"

"No; on the contrary, I shall try and rest. But I want the people here to think me remarkably well; I shall be detained by public business. Have a courier all ready and booted, and be sure that he is seen. Give orders and counter-orders about him. Let it be supposed that I am very busy, and, of course, in good health."

"Then you want your beloved heirs to burst with vexation?"

"I want to bury them, Johan."

"Amen, my dear master! Shall I wait on you as far as the supper-room?"

"No, I like to go silently and take my company by surprise; just now, especially."

The baron accordingly departed for the supper-room, and Johan went into the cabinet, where Massarelli, who was waiting with great anxiety, found the time pass very slowly.

"Come, my boy," said Johan, with his most gracious air, "it's supper-time."

"But — am I not to see the baron again this evening? He told me to wait here."

"He sends you word by me to have a quiet supper, and wait for further orders. Do you suppose you are the only person he has to listen to? Come along. Are you afraid of me? Do I look like a bad sort of fellow?"

"You do, upon my word," said Guido to himself, as he slipped a stiletto, which he knew how to handle very skilfully, into his sleeve.

Johan espied the performance, and hurried out of the room. Guido endeavored to follow, but he was seized by two colossal fellows, who were stationed at the door, and who led him, with a pistol at his head, to the prison of the chateau. There he was searched and disarmed, and then handed over to the guardian of the place, a sort of bravo and adventurer, in short a professional villain, who was known in the chateau as "the captain," but who never made his appearance in the saloons.

Johan, who had followed, supervised the examination that was made of Guido's pockets and clothes with a benign air. When certain that he had no papers concealed about him, he withdrew, saying:

"Good-night, my young friend. Next time, don't try any tricks."

He added to himself:

"He said he had the proofs of a great secret. Either he has lied like an idiot, or he has been cautious, like a man that understands business; but he was not cautious enough. So much the worse for him. A small dose of imprisonment will fetch either the proofs or the confession."

Meanwhile the baron, although in great physical pain, quietly entered the supper-room, ate a little with an air of appetite, and was as gay as it was in his nature to be. That is, he stated, with an icy smile, sundry propositions of a frightfully atheistical kind, and indulged in various odious and cruel insinuations about sundry persons who were absent.

When calumniating his neighbors, it was the practice of this amiable gentleman to speak in a low voice, and with an air of indifference; but, on such occasions, his heirs and flatterers were only too ready to repeat his witty sayings with much noise and laughter. As was natural, many persons present would be shocked by these remarks; but, by accepting their host's invitation, they had put it out of their power to contradict him boldly, and such timid defence of the absent as they ventured upon only served, as a matter of course, to make their case the worse. The baron would repeat his remarks

with an air of disdainful bravado, and would be eagerly sustained by his satellites. Those of his guests who were really right-minded could only sigh and blush at their own weakness in having allowed themselves to be dragged into such an ogre's den. But the master of the house never protracted any discussion. After hurling some bitter sarcasm at good-natured and timid people, he would rise and go out, leaving it quite uncertain as to whether or not he intended to return. A universal sense of constraint would prevail, until it became evident that he was not going to return, and then everybody would take breath, even his most unscrupulous dependents, who were quite as uneasy in his presence as the rest of the company.

On this evening, however, Baron Olaus lost a good opportunity of revenging himself, and inflicting pain upon another. Had he known of Margaret's two visits to Stollborg, he would not have failed to proclaim the fact in some bitterly satirical way. Fortunately, Providence had guarded the young girl's innocent secret. Her enemy, who would have read in her conduct conclusive proofs that the counterfeit Goefle was at Stollborg, had not received the slightest hint on the subject. Johan had caused Ulphilas to be closely questioned about all the persons who had visited the old tower in the course of the day; but Ulphilas had not seen Margaret, and he had a sufficient reason for making a singularly appropriate reply to all inquiries about Christian's appearance; to wit, the terror with which he had been inspired by the young man's grimaces and threats in an unknown tongue. To Ulphilas he had appeared even more frightful without a mask than he had seemed to Johan with one; the assertions of the boor satisfied the major-domo that his opinion was correct, and led him to confirm the baron in his error. The result of the investigation was, therefore, that the handsome Christian Goefle had disappeared, and that the real Christian Waldo was a monster.

The baron communicated this latter piece of intelligence to the party at the supper-table with a kind of satisfaction; for, just as he came in, they were praising the artist, and

he found a certain pleasure in dissipating an agreeable illusion.

"You ought not to spoil his beauty in the eyes of Countess Margaret, baron," said Olga, "she was enthusiastic over his delivery, and now I wager anything that she will not take the least pleasure in listening to him."

Margaret, who was seated near Olga and the baron, pretended not to hear, so that she need not be obliged to answer, in case the latter should seek to enter into conversation with her, as he had already tried in vain to do several times since the previous evening.

"You think, then," resumed the baron, still addressing Olga, but speaking quite loud, "that Countess Margaret would not be touched by a lover's plea, unless it should be urged by a young and handsome man."

"I am sure of it," answered Olga, lowering her voice, "and no man is handsome, in her eyes, who is more than twenty-five years old."

Olga intended this as a delicate compliment to her semi-centennial intended, but he was not in a good humor, and the arrow missed aim.

"She is probably quite right," he replied, so low that no one but the young Russian could hear him; "the longer one lives after that fortunate age the more one loses one's good looks, and the less can he expect to marry for love."

"True," said Olga, "if he does lose his good looks, but—"

"But even if he does not become altogether horrible," persisted the baron, "he will still be fortunate, if he is able to contract a sensible marriage."

Olga was about to reply, but he closed her mouth by adding:

"Do not find fault with that poor child. She has one great merit in my eyes—she is sincere. When she hates people she shows it so frankly, that the fortunate man who shall succeed in pleasing her may trust her completely. She is a person who will never deceive."

Olga had no opportunity to reply, for the baron turned away and began talking to some one else.

The young Russian was extremely irritated, and very

much disquieted. When they arose from the table, Margaret, who was equally anxious, though from a very different cause, approached her.

"What was the baron saying?" she asked, drawing her aside; "he was talking about me, I know, for he was looking straight at me for two or three minutes."

"You only fancied so," answered Olga, dryly; "he does not think of you at all any more."

"Ah! I wish I could be sure of it. Tell me the truth, dear. Is it so?"

"Your anxiety, Margaret, is not very delicate, allow me to say. You think that, in spite of your severity to him, he still adores you."

"Very well, why not?" asked Margaret, resolving to pique her companion for the sake of getting at the truth; "perhaps I shall succeed in supplanting you, in despite of myself, exactly by being severe!"

A flash of wounded vanity gleamed in the eyes of the pretty Russian.

"Margaret," she said, "you want war, and you shall have it. Here, take back your present! You gave me a handsome bracelet, but I don't want it any longer. Here is a ring that is much handsomer."

She drew a box from her pocket, which she opened; it contained two ornaments — Margaret's bracelet and the baron's ring.

"The black diamond!" cried Margaret, shrinking back in terror. "What! are you not afraid to touch it?"

But before Olga could reply, she recovered herself:

"No matter, no matter," she said, embracing her, "I decline war, dear friend, and I really thank you, with all my heart, for showing me your engagement-ring. Keep the bracelet, I beg of you; be assured of my thanks and my friendship."

Olga burst into tears.

"Margaret," she said, "if you betray me I am ruined. I swore to keep my engagement secret for eight days; and if the baron suspects that I have failed in my word — and he will, if you show how glad you are — he

will break it off, and begin to think of you again — especially since he has never ceased to do so.”

“And that is what you are crying for? Why then, you love him, do you not? Well, my dear friend, however strange your preference seems to me, it sets you right, in my opinion. I thought that you were merely ambitious. If you love, I love you — and I am sorry for you!”

“Ah!” said Olga, “you are sorry for me, are you not?”

Drawing Margaret to the end of the gallery, she sobbed upon her shoulder, and could scarcely keep from breaking out into violent hysterical cries. Margaret carried her away to her own room, where, after a time, she quieted her.

“There, I am well again now,” said Olga, rising; “I have had two or three such attacks since yesterday, but this is the last; I feel it. I have made up my mind; I intend to be calm. I can trust you, and I will not be weak, I will not be afraid, I will not suffer any longer.”

She took the ring from her pocket, put it on her finger, and turned pale again as she gazed upon it, with a melancholy expression. Then, taking it off, she said:

“I must not wear it yet.”

And she replaced it in the box, and in her pocket.

Margaret left her without understanding what was really passing in her mind. This strange passion for a man of the baron’s age and character seemed to her inexplicable, but she was so generous and so simple-hearted that she believed in it; while the truth was that Olga, seized with a sudden hatred for her betrothed husband, and disgust at her betrothal ring, was struggling against what she called her human weakness — was trying hard to quell the revolt of her heart, her mind, her whole being, so that she might consummate, without shrinking, her unhappy and dangerous conquest of a great name and a high social position.

During this scene the baron had been giving orders for the race and masquerade, as if he had expected to be present at them himself. But, having done this, he left his guests to make their preparations for the evening’s entertainment, and retired to his own room, worn out with

fatigue and pain. In the meanwhile his horses, magnificently harnessed, and restrained with difficulty by the coachman, who pretended to be waiting for his master, were gayly prancing before his private door.

He was, in fact, shut up with his physician, a young man of larger attainments than experience, who, for a year past, had been attached exclusively to his service.

"Doctor," said he, putting aside a dose which the young man offered him in a timid and apprehensive manner, "you are not treating me properly! More opium, I'll venture!"

"Your lordship requires quieting medicines; your nervous system is in a state of extreme agitation."

"By Jove! I know that perfectly well; but pray soothe without weakening me. Relieve me from this convulsive tremor, but do not deprive me of my strength."

The sick man was demanding an impossibility, but the physician dared not tell him so.

"I am in hopes," he said, "that this draught will quiet without enfeebling you."

"Well, but will it act quickly? I want to sleep two or three hours, and then get up and attend to some business. Can you guarantee that I shall regain my usual command of my faculties in the course of the night?"

"Your lordship is driving me to despair! Do you propose to go to work again to-night after yesterday's attack, and to-day's? You cannot go on in that way."

"But have I not an uncommon constitution? And have you not told me a hundred times that you would cure me? Have you been deceiving me? Are you making sport of me?"

"Ah!" replied the physician, with a distressed expression, "you surely could not believe such a thing!"

"Well, well, give me the draught. Will it act at once?"

"In a quarter of an hour, provided you do not destroy its effect by your agitation."

"Give me my watch. There, put it by my side. I want to see if you are sure of the effects of your own drugs."

The baron drank off the potion, seated himself in his great arm-chair, and rang for his valet-de-chambre.

"Go and find Major Larrison," he said, "and say to him from me that I beg him to superintend the race. He understands about such matters better than any one else."

The valet went out, but the baron recalled him almost instantly.

"Tell Johan to go to bed and to sleep. I shall want him at three o'clock in the morning. Let him come himself, and wake me up. Go now — no, wait, I am to hunt to-morrow. Is everything ready? Yes? Very good. Now you may go."

The valet really went this time; and the young physician, who was very much agitated, remained alone with his patient.

"Your draught has no effect at all," said the latter, impatiently. "I ought to have been asleep by this time."

"If your lordship will persist in tormenting yourself about a thousand and one details —"

"The devil! my dear sir, if I were not obliged to torment myself, I should not need a physician. Come, take a seat. Let us have a little quiet conversation."

"If, instead of talking, your lordship would reflect quietly."

"Reflect! I reflect a great deal too much as it is. It is that that makes me so feverish. No, no, let us talk, as we did last night. I fell asleep, you know, talking. You are aware, doctor, that I have resolved definitely to marry?"

"That pretty Countess Margaret?"

"Not at all; she's a little fool. I am going to marry the stately Olga. I mean to have some Russian children."

"They will be handsome, that is certain."

"Yes, if my wife has good taste; for I don't believe one word of your flatteries, doctor. My wife will not be faithful to me. What difference does it make, provided that I have an heir; provided all my hopeful relations, cousins and second cousins, are baffled and infuriated. Doctor, I insist upon living long enough to see that; do

you understand? Now see to it;—remember I don't bequeath you a single ducat. I shall pay you exorbitantly as long as I live, so as to make it your interest to do well by me; but that is all. As for my wife, I shall treat her in the same way. During my life, she shall have all the luxury, all the jewels she wants, and more and more every year. After my death, unless she has saved something, she will have nothing at all; I won't leave her even the guardianship of her own child. Far from it; I don't want to be poisoned."

"You are feeding your mind on gloomy ideas, your lordship; that's a bad diet."

"What nonsense that is, doctor! It is as if you should tell me that I did wrong to have too much bile in my liver. Is it my fault?"

"But can't you force yourself to dwell on cheerful ideas? There's that comedy of marionettes, for instance. It was very amusing."

"Think about a set of puppets? Do you want to turn me into an idiot?"

"For the time being, certainly, if I could quiet down the fire of your thoughts—"

"No compliments about my intellect, I beg you. I am conscious that it is failing, decidedly."

"Your lordship is the only one who perceives it."

The baron shrugged his shoulders, yawned, and was silent for a few minutes. His eyes seemed to grow larger, the pupils dilated, and his lower lip drooped a little. Sleep was approaching.

Suddenly he started up, and pointed to the wall.

"There it is again," he cried, "just as it was yesterday! It was a man at first, and then the face changed—There, she is looking out of the window—she bends over—run, run, doctor! They have deceived me! betrayed me! I have been fooled like a child—A child? No, there was no child!—"

By this time he was wide awake, and sitting down again, he added, with a gloomy smile:

"It was in Christian Waldo's comedy;—a juggler's

trick ! You see, doctor, I am thinking about the puppets, as you wished. I feel heavy — do not leave me."

And even as he spoke, the baron fell asleep, with his eyes open like a corpse.

In a few moments, his eyelids relaxed and then closed. The doctor felt his pulse. It was too full and heavy. In his opinion the patient ought to be bled, but how could he induce him to allow it?

"A thankless, odious, impossible task to be keeping this man alive, in spite of heaven and himself!" Thus reflected the poor doctor. "Either he has constant attacks of insanity, or else he is tormented by remorse. I feel as if I should go crazy myself from being with him; the terrors of his imagination seize upon me, too, as if I were becoming the accomplice of some crime, by trying to save his life!"

But the young man had a mother, and a betrothed sweetheart; and as a few years of lucrative employment would enable him to marry the one, and save the other from poverty, he had consented to be nailed to this corpse, incessantly galvanized into a seeming life by the resources of his art. Sometimes he was full of devotion to his task, and again felt so broken down with fatigue and disgust, that he scarcely knew whether he would prefer to have his patient die or recover. The young man was of a kindly disposition and an excellent heart. This constant intercourse with an atheist was freezing him; and he had not even the privilege of defending his opinions, for contradiction irritated the patient. He was sociable and cheerful, while the sick man, under his outward habit of sour and cynical raillery, was gloomy and misanthropic.

While the baron lay there asleep, moreover, the pleasures of the night were under full headway. The sounds of fireworks and music, the barking of the dogs roused out of their kennels by the stamping of the horses that were being harnessed, the laughter of the ladies in the corridors of the chateau, the gleaming lights that could be seen moving upon the lake, everything that was going on outside of the silent and gloomy chamber where the

sick man, immovable and livid, lay in heavy slumber, intensified the young man's sense of isolation and servitude.

The Countess d'Elveda, in the meanwhile, was absorbed in conspiring with the Russian ambassador against the nationality of Sweden; while the cousins and second cousins of the baron were keeping watch upon the door of his apartments.

"He will go," they whispered to each other; "no, he will not be able. He is more ill than he will confess. He is better than people think."

How were they to ascertain? The servants, perfectly devoted to the absolute will of this master, who paid well, and punished well too—for in Sweden, servants at this period were still liable to corporal punishment—invariably replied, when questioned, that the baron had never been better. And as for the doctor, the baron, on engaging him, had required him to give his word of honor that he would never reveal the serious nature of his malady.

As the reader has already been told, the baron, to account for his frequent disappearances from his entertainments, had caused it to be generally understood that he was always liable to be called away by some one or other of his numerous and important engagements. This was, moreover, to a certain extent true; he was accustomed to supervise the details of the political intrigues in which he was concerned; and his private affairs were embarrassed with the lawsuits to which his restless disposition and despotic claims were constantly giving rise. Now, however, superadded to all these causes of excitement, was a strange trouble, indistinct as yet, but which produced more effect upon his bodily health than all his ordinary annoyances together. Forgotten suspicions, apprehensions long ago quieted, had been reawakened in his mind since the ball of the evening before, and still more since the exhibition of marionettes. The result had been one of the nervous attacks to which he was liable, whose effect was to distort his mouth, and give a distinct cast to one of his eyes. As he was very vain of his beauty—his face, although wasted, was still noble and regular—especially at the present time, when he

was proposing to be married, he had shut himself up as much as possible since this disfiguration came on, and was receiving medical treatment, to carry him through the attack as rapidly as possible.

As soon as he awoke from his slumber, his first care was to look in a glass which was placed near him. Pleased to find that he had recovered his natural expression, he said to the physician :

"Come, there's another one over ! I feel as if I had slept well. Did I dream, doctor?"

"No," replied the young man, but with some embarrassment at the falsehood he was telling.

"You don't say that very frankly," answered the baron. "Now, if I talked in my sleep, you must tell me exactly what I said. You know I insist upon it."

"You only uttered disconnected words, without meaning. They did not indicate any distinct thoughts."

"Then your prescriptions must really be having a good effect. The physician whom I employed formerly, used to tell me my dreams. They were strange enough—frightful ! I seem to have none now but insignificant ones."

"Are you not aware of it yourself, your lordship? Don't you feel less fatigued on waking than formerly?"

"No, I can't say that I do."

"That will come in time."

"I hope so ! Now, doctor, you may leave me, if you please ; you can go to bed. If I need you, I will send and have you waked up. I feel as if I could sleep a while longer. Send me my valet-de-chambre ; I will try and get into bed."

"My predecessor," said the young doctor to himself, as he went out, "heard too much, and repeated too freely what he heard. The baron, in consequence, was offended ; they quarrelled, and the doctor was persecuted, until he had to leave the country. A good lesson to me !"

Christian, meanwhile, had rejoined M. Goeffe, at Stollborg. The doctor of laws was in great triumph. He had forced the lock of one of the great wardrobes in

the guard-room, and had found some feminine garments, which were quite magnificent.

"These things," he said to Christian, "must certainly be a remnant of the wardrobe of the Baroness Hilda; either forgotten, or religiously preserved by Stenson. They will do nicely for costumes, they are so thoroughly old-fashioned. They belong twenty years back, at least. See if you can't get into one of them. The baroness was tall, and it's no harm if your dress should be a little short. I mean to contrive a sultan's dress for myself, with my pelisse and a turban of some kind. You can help me get one up, Christian; you are an artist. Every artist must know how to make a turban."

Christian was not at all intoxicated, and the burglarious performance of M. Goeffe rather disturbed him.

"People are always accusing persons in my line of such things," he said, "and generally with some reason. You will see that this will make me trouble."

"Bah! bah! I am here," cried M. Goeffe; "I will take all the responsibility. Come, Christian, put on this dress! Try it, at any rate!"

"My dear M. Goeffe," said Christian, "just let me swallow something or other, no matter what; I am dying of hunger."

"Sure enough! But be quick."

"Besides," said Christian, who, standing as he was, began at the same time to eat his supper and to examine the clothes that were displayed before him, "I don't know how it is, but I feel a sort of reluctance to touch those old relics. The fate of that poor Baroness Hilda was such a sad one! Do you know that I have been growing more and more suspicious about the manner of her death?"

"Go to the devil!" answered M. Goeffe. "I am not in the mood for figuring over all those old stories now. I want to laugh and fly about. Come, come, Christian, to work! let those melancholy notions go over until to-morrow. See—put on this polonaise dress; it's

splendid. If you can only get your shoulders through it, the rest will come right of itself."

"I don't believe I can," said Christian, as he put his hand into one of the pockets. "But what a little hand she must have had, to go into such a small place as that."

"And you as well, it seems!"

"Yes, but I can't draw mine out again. Stay, what's this! Why, a note!"

"Let's see, let's see!" cried the doctor of laws; "that must be very curious!"

"No," said Christian, "we ought not to read it."

"Why not?"

"I don't know—it seems like a profanation."

"In that case, I have been guilty of a great many—it's part of my trade to rummage secret family archives."

And M. Goeffe seized the old yellow paper, and read as follows:

"MY DEARLY BELOVED HILDA:

"I have just reached Stockholm, and find the Count de Rosenstein here. I shall not be obliged, therefore, to go on to Colmar, and shall set out on my return on the 10th instant, to embrace you again, and comfort you, and take care of you, and to indulge with you in new dreams of happiness, since God has once more blessed our union. I send you this by express, to put you at ease about my journey, which was not all unpleasant, though so fatiguing that I congratulated myself more than once upon my prudence in not bringing you with me, in the situation in which you are. As far as to Falun, I had to ride on horseback the whole way. Farewell, then, my love, until the 15th or 16th, at latest. We shall have no lawsuit with Rosenstein; it will be all arranged.

"I love you.

"ADELSTAN DE WALDEMORA."

"M. Goeffe," said Christian to the lawyer, who was silently refolding the dress, "does it not seem to you

horribly sad to find this letter of love and conjugal happiness among the clothes of this dead lady?"

"It is melancholy!" replied M. Goeffe, taking off his spectacles and his extempore turban. "And so very strange! Do you know that this letter has set me to thinking? But the poor baroness was mistaken; she was not pregnant, for she made a voluntary declaration to that effect; Stenson told me so to-day. He was present when she signed it. But let's see the date of that letter."

M. Goeffe replaced his spectacles, and read: "Stockholm, 5th March, 1746."

"Yes," he continued, "that agrees, if I remember right. Pshaw! That story is too sad for a man who wants to amuse himself. But I will keep the note, however; it might suggest something. I will examine my father's papers again. But come, Christian, have you given up the idea of disguising yourself?"

"With those old clothes that smell of the grave? Yes indeed! they have chilled me to the marrow of my bones. She was virtuous, cultivated and beautiful, you told me this morning; the pearl of Dalecarlia! And she died quite young, did she not?"

"At twenty-five or twenty-six; about ten months after the date of this note: it was in March, 1746, that Baron Adelstan was assassinated. These are probably the last words he ever wrote to his wife, and probably that is the reason she carried the letter in her pocket until her death."

"How unfortunate she was!" said Christian. "A young wife, a young mother, suddenly left a widow and childless; and then to die a victim to the baron's hatred—"

"Oh, there is no proof whatever of that! But hark to the firing! The race is beginning, and here we are talking over matters that have no interest for anybody, and which, after all, are none of our business. If you feel melancholy this evening, my boy, stay at home; for my part, I want to run about. I must get out into the air. I have done too much dreaming to-day."

Christian would really have preferred to remain at home, but M. Goeffe was so excited that he was rather afraid to let him go alone; so he said:

"Come, let us give up the disguises. It will not do for us to be seen together with our faces uncovered, so let us both go masked. You shall be Christian Waldo, as you are the best dressed; and as I have been taken for my assistant once already to-night, I will be Puffo."

"Very well imagined!" cried M. Goeffe. "Come along! By the way, we will leave the light burning for Master Nils; he may wake up, and then he will be frightened, and perhaps hungry. I will leave a leg of chicken here under his nose."

"Little Nils! Is he here again?"

"Why yes, certainly! The first thing I did, on returning, was to go and hunt him up in the stable, bring him in here, undress him, and put him to bed. The young monkey would have frozen before morning, out in that straw."

"Had he come to his senses at all?"

"Oh, perfectly; at least enough to complain that I troubled him dreadfully, and to grumble while I was putting him to bed."

"And where can Puffo be? I did not see him in the stable when I put Jean in there again."

"I did not see him, either; he must have gone to get drunk again with Ulphilas. Well, much good may it do them! It is almost midnight; let us go. You will help me harness my horse. Ah! you may be sure that my good Loki will not come in last."

"But will they not recognize you from your horse and sleigh?"

"No, there's nothing particular about the sleigh. It is true that I bought the horse in this neighborhood only last year; but we will cover him up with his travelling-cloth."

The goal selected for the race proposed by the baron, and intrusted to the superintendence of Major Larrson, was the *hogar* which stood at the further end of the lake, about half a league from Stollborg and the new chateau. These two buildings, as we have said, were quite near

each other, the one being built on an island not far from the shore, and the other on the shore itself. A hogar is a tumulus, or mound, such as are supposed to have been used as burial-places by the ancient Scandinavian chiefs. They are usually round, and very steep. The top is flat, and formerly, it is said, platforms were erected upon them, where the barbarian kings pronounced judgment, using them as courts of justice. They are met with in all parts of Sweden, and, indeed, are exceedingly numerous.

The one at which the race was to terminate presented a fantastic appearance; it had been crowned with a triple row of torches of resin, and through their dark red flames, and clouds of smoke, a gigantic white figure was visible, towering on high. This was a statue of snow, formless and colossal, which the peasants had built up during the day, by order of the baron. Knowing perfectly well the surname that had been conferred upon him, he had banteringly promised the ladies to show them, by way of a surprise, a portrait of himself upon the top of the mound. The rudeness of the work harmonized with the savage features of the landscape, and recalled the idols of former ages, with their large heads and short rough garments, which, according to tradition, represented Thor, the Scandinavian Jupiter, holding the terrible hammer above his crowned head.

This white colossus, seeming to float up in the air, had a very impressive effect, and no one regretted having ventured out into the cold night air to enjoy so strange a spectacle. There was an aurora borealis, pale, and contending with the light of the moon; but the alternations of color, and the waves of rising and falling light, which characterize this phenomenon, gave the landscape a shifting uncertainty of outline, and cast over it a changing play of lights and shadows which it is impossible to describe. Christian fancied that he was dreaming; and he repeated over and over again to M. Goeffe that this strange scenery, notwithstanding the inclemency of the climate, appealed to his imagination more powerfully than anything he had seen in all his travels.

The exercises of the race had already begun when our two friends joined the party, and they drove along the flank of the other vehicles, so as not to interfere with their prearranged order. The ice had been carefully examined, and the road, marked out by colossal torches, wound past the points of rock and islets covered with pines and birch-trees, which dotted the surface of the lake. A phalanx of richly-ornamented sleighs, four abreast, flew along the course like arrows; the skill of the drivers, and the perfect training of the horses, maintaining them at exactly the same distance from each other.

Towards the shore where the hogar stood the lake was deeper than elsewhere, and presented a broad expanse, perfectly level and unobstructed. On reaching this, all the sleighs came to a halt in a semicircle, and the young people who were to compete for the prize took their places in a line, ready for the signal. The ladies, and older gentlemen, left their vehicles, and ascended a little island, prepared for the purpose by being thickly laid with pine boughs, where they would be able to behold and judge the prowess of the competing parties without danger of freezing their feet. A great fire, built upon the rocks behind the natural gallery where the audience was thus assembled, cast a powerful red glow over the whole scene.

The picture presented by the assembled company was not less strange than the landscape which served as its frame. Everybody wore masks, and found them a comfortable defence against the coldness of the air. For a similar reason, all the costumes were heavy, and well furred; but this did not prevent a great display of gold, embroidery, and glittering weapons. The racers were plainly visible in their light, uncovered sleighs, which represented fantastic images of different animals: gigantic silver swans with red beaks, dolphins of green and gold, fishes with tails curved over their backs, and so on. Major Larsson was mounted on a frightful dragon, and was himself disguised as a monster, crowned with glittering thunderbolts. The judges who were to award the prize could be seen moving to and fro on the top of the hogar, costumed as antique warriors with winged helmets, or with hoods

having a horn over each ear, as Odin is represented in his costume of ceremony; that is to say, in all the splendor of his divinity.

Christian tried to recognize Margaret among the ladies, who were disguised as sibyls, or barbarian queens. He could not succeed; and from that moment the whole ceremonial, without losing its brilliancy, lost all interest for him, except as a mere spectacle. M. Goeffe, however, who did not feel the same disappointment, continued very much excited.

"Christian," he cried, "in spite of our costumes, which are no costumes, and our sleigh, which is only a sleigh, why should we not take a place in the line? Because my brave Loki has no plumes, nor stuffed birds, nor horns on his head, will that make his legs any the worse?"

"That is for you to say, doctor," replied Christian; "you know him; you can tell whether he will cover us with glory or with shame."

"It will be with glory; I know it."

"Go on, then."

"But the poor fellow will be tired. He will get heated, and God only knows whether he will not have inflammation of the lungs!"

"Don't go, then."

"The devil take your indifference, Christian! For my part, my hands are burning to try it."

"Try it, then!"

"But for a sensible man like me to run his horse's legs off, just to beat a parcel of boys! It's absurd, Christian, isn't it?"

"It is, if you think so; it all depends upon the degree of intoxication with which we go into such amusements."

"We'll go!" exclaimed M. Goeffe; "to resist the suggestions of intoxication is to be reasonable; that is, to be stupid. Get up, Loki!"

"Wait!" cried Christian, jumping out of the sleigh. "Let me take off his head-cover. How can he run with his nose muffled up like that?"

"Very true, Christian; thank you, my boy, but be quick! they are all ready."

Scarcely had the doctor of laws spoken before a fire-work, placed upon another islet at the rear of the course, went off with a formidable noise. It was the signal for starting.

"Go on! go on!" cried Christian to M. Goefle, who would have held in Loki until the young man had resumed his seat; "you are losing time!"

He encouraged the horse, who set off at the top of his speed, while Christian remained with the head-cover in his hand, watching the career of the advocate and his faithful Loki. He did not look after them very long, however. As he moved a little to one side to get out of the way of the remaining horses, who, excited by the fire-works and the example of their companions who had joined in the race, were stepping about in a very lively way, he found himself close to a blue and silver sleigh, which he recognized as Margaret's. This light vehicle was modelled in the spreading shape of a carriage-body of the time of Louis XV., and was mounted, or rather set down upon runners, so that it was easy to look, without any effort whatever, directly through the glasses, which were now slightly incrustated by frost. Supposing, of course, that Margaret was upon the rocky audience gallery with her companions, Christian did not expect to find her within. Still he looked, all the same, and, to his surprise, beheld her in her usual costume, and without a mask. A little indisposed, or pretending to be so, she had remained alone, and was watching the race through the door of the sleigh. The driver had taken a place a little aside from the rest, and had turned the sleigh in such a way as to give Margaret a good view of the course; and this also enabled Christian to gaze at Margaret and to be quite near her, without being seen by the rest of the company, who were, besides, absorbed in gazing at the race.

He would not have ventured to speak to her, and he took pains to assume a careless attitude, as if his being there was quite accidental, when she suddenly lowered the glass to speak to him. He was still holding the head-gear of the horse, and she took him for a servant.

"Tell me, my friend," she said, in a low voice, though

without any affectation, "who is that man in a black mask like yours, who just passed, and who is racing now? It is your master, is it not, Christian Waldo?"

"No, mademoiselle," replied Christian, in French, and without changing his voice or accent, "I am Christian Waldo!"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* how fortunate!" replied the young girl, with an intonation of joy that she could not repress; and lowering her voice still more, for Christian had come close up to the door, "is it you, M. Christian Goeffe? What suggested to you to assume that character this evening?"

"Perhaps it was in order to remain here without compromising my uncle," he replied.

"Then you did care a little about staying?" she rejoined, in a tone that made Christian's heart beat.

He had not the courage to reply that he did not care; it was more than he could do; but he felt that it was time to put an end to a comedy so dangerous, if not to the young countess, at least to himself, and, with an effort of truthful self-sacrifice that made him dizzy, he said promptly:

"I wanted to stay so as to undeceive you. I am not the person you supposed. I am what I tell you, Christian Waldo."

"I do not understand," she said; "is it not enough to have mystified me once? Why do you wish to play another part? Do you suppose I did not recognize your voice when you were performing with Christian Waldo's marionettes with so much spirit? I saw very plainly that you were more brilliant than he —"

"But what makes you believe that?" said Christian, astonished; "to whom do you suppose you were listening this evening?"

"To you and to him. There were two voices, I am sure, perhaps three — yours, Waldo's, and that of his assistant."

"There were only two, I give you my word."

"Very well, what then? I tell you I recognized yours. You cannot deceive me as to that."

"Why, no; my voice is my voice; I do not deny that; but I must tell you —"

"Listen! listen!" exclaimed Margaret; "do you hear? They are proclaiming the name of the victor. It is Christian Waldo, I think — yes, yes, I am sure of it. I hear it distinctly, and I can plainly see the man in the mask, standing up, in his little black sleigh. That is he! He is the real one. You are only a counterfeit Waldo. But really, M. Goefle, you ought to take his place; the best things in the whole play, and the best delivered — and, above all, the entire part of Alonzo — were yours! Come now, let me hear you venture to assert that I am mistaken!"

"As to the part of Alonzo, I cannot deny that."

"Shall you play again to-morrow, M. Goefle?"

"Certainly."

"That will be very kind of you! For my part, I thank you; but are you quite sure that no one will suspect who you are? You must keep yourself well hidden at Stollborg. I am glad to see that you are so prudent, and know so well how to disguise yourself. No one could recognize you, dressed as you are now. But you must go away, please! They are all getting into their sleighs to drive to the hogar and compliment the victor. My aunt will certainly join me. No, she is going in the Russian ambassador's sleigh. She leaves me alone! A mother would not have done that, M. Christian. An aunt, and so young and handsome — well, certainly, she is not much like a mother! Stay; she will surely send M. Stangstadius to keep me company!"

"M. Stangstadius!" exclaimed Christian, "where is he? I do not see him —"

"He was simple enough to put on a mask, but nobody can mistake him; if he were anywhere within sight, you would certainly recognize him. No, he is not coming, and they are all setting off."

"Mademoiselle," said Margaret's driver, in Dalecarlian, to his young mistress, "her ladyship your aunt is making me a sign to follow."

"Do so, then," she said; "but you are on foot, M.

Goefle! Jump up on the driver's seat; you cannot go with us otherwise."

"What will your aunt say?"

Christian asked the question, but he jumped up on the seat nevertheless, though not without regret that the conversation was ended. But Margaret closed the side window and opened the one in front, which was almost even with his face. The sleigh flew noiselessly over the snow, over which Peterson was driving just outside the beaten track, for he had lost his place in the regular array. The good fellow did not understand a single word of French, and the conversation continued:

"What is happening at the chateau?" asked Christian, hoping to divert Margaret's attention from himself. "I have not seen the baron here; I should have thought he would have been as easily recognized by his height, as Stangstadius by his gait."

"He has shut himself up, under the pretence of pressing and unexpected business. That means that he is worse; no one is deceived by it. Everybody saw his mouth drawn to one side, and his eye distorted. Don't you think he is an extraordinary man, after all, to battle so with death? He meant to have raced to-night, with the young men, and he would certainly have won the prize, he has such splendid horses! There is to be a bear-hunt to-morrow, and either the baron will be at the hunt and will kill his bear, or he will be buried before any one has thought of countermanding the sport. One is just as possible as the other. Does not that make the situation here very singular for all of us? It seems as if the Snow Man took pleasure in seeing how few friends he has, since we all go on amusing ourselves in his house, as if nothing were the matter."

"But, Margaret, you admire his resolution, and he succeeds in producing, even upon you, the effect he desires."

"My dear confidant," said Margaret, gayly, "you must know that my aversion for the baron has almost entirely ceased. He has become quite indifferent to me; he is going to marry—but that is a secret that I discovered accidentally, and have promised to keep. He is not going

to marry me, at all events, and I shall have the happiness of remaining free — and poor —”

“Poor! I thought you were at least very well off.”

“Well, it turns out that I have nothing. I have had a quarrel with my aunt to-day — as usual, about the baron; and she has declared that she would give me no portion, and that she should take possession of the little inheritance which my father left me; she claims to have a right to it on account of some loan that she made him, of I don’t know how many ducats. I did not understand anything about it, except that I am ruined!”

“Ah, Margaret!” exclaimed Christian, involuntarily, “why am I not rich and well born? Understand me,” he continued, taking her hand, for she started, and seemed inclined to throw herself upon the further seat of the sleigh, “this is not a declaration, I am not so audacious as to address you in any such way. It would be an act of madness in me, for I have nothing in the world, and neither family nor position. But you have permitted me to be your friend. May I not tell you that, if I were rich and noble, I would divide with you as I would with my sister?”

“Thank you, Christian,” answered Margaret, still trembling, although reassured; “I see how good your heart is, and I know how kindly you feel towards me. But why do you say that you have no family, when your uncle’s reputation is so high —”

She paused, and added, with a forced laugh:

“You must not suppose I meant to say — what certainly I had no thought of. But no, you will not think anything of the kind; you have too much good sense. You are straightforward and confiding, like me; and you will understand that, if I question you, it is because I am interested about your future prosperity — no matter who may share it with you. Tell me, then, why do you torment yourself about your birth, which many people would envy?”

“Ah, Margaret,” said Christian, “you wish to know, and it is my wish to tell you. Here we are at the end of our ride, and I shall leave you, this time,

forever. I will not secure a place in your memory at the price of a lie. To be despised and forgotten is all I deserve from you, and I accept my fate—so much the worse for me. Believe me, there is no such person as Christian Goeffe. M. Goeffe never had either son or nephew.”

“That is not true!” exclaimed Margaret. “He said so to-day at the chateau; and everybody was talking about it, but nobody believed him. You are his son—by a secret marriage. He will acknowledge and cherish you. He cannot help doing it.”

“I swear to you, upon my honor, that I am absolutely nothing to him; and that yesterday morning he knew no more of me than you know now!”

“Upon your honor! You swear upon your honor? But if you are not Christian Goeffe, I do not know you at all! Nor is there any reason why I should believe you. If you are Christian Waldo, who, they say, can assume any human voice—ah, I cannot understand it! But it distresses me very much. Thank God! I still doubt—”

“Doubt no longer, Margaret!” said Christian, jumping down from his seat as the sleigh, at that moment, stopped. “Look at me, and know me for what I really am: a man who has dedicated to you the profoundest respect, the most absolute devotion of his heart, and who swears to you, upon his honor, that he is the real Christian Waldo!”

As he spoke, Christian lifted his silken mask from his forehead, moved resolutely into the light of the lantern, and showed his face plainly as he bent towards the door. Margaret, recognizing her friend of the previous evening, uttered a cry of grief, perhaps even too expressive, and covered her face with her hands, while Christian, lowering his mask once more, disappeared in the crowd of servants and peasants who were assembled to look at the sport.

He very soon approached M. Goeffe, whom they were talking of carrying in triumph; not because he had reached the goal first—he was, in fact, the last to arrive—but for performing a brilliant and unexpected feat.

He had caught with his whip, while going at full speed, the wig of M. Stangstadius, who had deposited himself, in spite of his opposition, upon Major Larrison's sleigh. M. Goefle had not, of course, done this intentionally. The end of his whip-lash, as he was cracking it in the air, had happened to entangle itself around the queue of the wig, by one of those chances which we call improbable, because they happen say only once in a thousand times. The learned man's hat, jerked off by M. Goefle's efforts to free his whip, had flown off and settled down like a great black bird in the snow; the wig had held fast to the queue, the queue had refused to part with the whip-lash, and the whip, which M. Goefle could not stop to adjust, thus ending in a mass of hair heavy with powder, lost all its effect upon the sides of the spirited Loki. In the first moments of his triumph, the victorious Larrison had seen nothing of this; but the outcries and complaints of Stangstadius, who, with his head tied up in a handkerchief, was demanding his wig from every one he could see, soon attracted his attention.

"He's the man!" shouted the insulted geologist, pointing to M. Goefle in his mask. "That Italian buffoon, in a silk mask. He did it on purpose, the rascal! Here, here, you scoundrel of a play-actor! I'll slap your face a hundred times, to teach you to joke with a man like me."

An immense burst of laughter greeted the wrath of Stangstadius, and the whole assembly shouted with applause the name of Christian Waldo; but the scene quickly changed. Stangstadius, irritated by the impudent laughter of the young people, darted towards the ravisher of his wig, who was standing erect upon his sleigh, piteously exhibiting the cause of his defeat, which looked not unlike a great fish at the end of a line. M. Goefle, in an assumed voice, began to accuse Stangstadius, in a comic manner, of having played off this trick on him, so as to prevent him from whipping his horse and winning the race; but the man of science, who was as nimble as a monkey, in spite of his unequal legs and crooked arms, scrambled up behind him,

snatched off his hat and his mask, and only paused in his projects of vengeance, on recognizing with surprise his friend Goeffle, who was instantly saluted with unanimous applause.

Though M. Goeffle was not known to all who were present, his name was repeated by a number of persons, and he was heartily greeted. The Swedes are very proud of their eminent men, especially in any pursuit that brings their native language into notice. Besides, the honorable character of the doctor of laws, and his reputation as a man of talent, secured him the respect and affection of all young people. They insisted on proclaiming him the victor in the race, and it was all he could do to prevent the good-natured major from transferring the prize to him. This was a drinking-horn, curiously carved and ornamented with Runic characters, in silver; a fac-simile of a precious relic of antiquity belonging to the baron's collection, and discovered in the course of excavations made in the hogar some years before.

"No, my dear major," said M. Goeffle, putting his now useless mask into his pocket, while Stangstadius replaced his wig upon his head, "I only ran for honor; and since my honor, or rather that of my horse, has not been tarnished by the few seconds' delay caused by that unlucky wig, I have nothing more to wish for. I am proud of Loki, and satisfied with myself. I should be still better contented," he added, as he stepped out of the sleigh, "if I knew what had become of the poor fellow's head-cover; he will catch cold."

"Here it is," said Christian in a low voice, approaching M. Goeffle; "but since you have been recognized, I must take myself off at once, my dear uncle. It was well enough for Christian Waldo to have a masked servant, but in your case, it would be quite out of character."

"No, no, Christian, I will not part with you!" said M. Goeffle. "We will take a look at the lake from the top of the hogar, and then go back to Stollborg. Stay, we'll give my horse to one of those peasants to hold, and then make the ascent. Take this side-path, and keep

out of the way of the curious. A black mask, just now, is noticed by everybody; and I see, unless we make our escape, that we shall soon be surrounded and cross-questioned."

XI.

WHILE Christian and M. Goeffe adroitly escaped behind the mound, the main body of the company returned to the new chateau; the hogar was so steep, and the cold so great, that they would not venture to ascend it. And yet, in an excavation half way up, a sort of tent had been prepared, in which the revellers were expected to take punch; but the ladies had declined, and most of the gentlemen followed them. In about half an hour, when Christian and the lawyer were coming down from the platform, where the statue, too much heated by the flames of the resinous torches, was beginning to melt, they had the curiosity to look into this grotto, which had been hung and closed in with tarred cloths. They found nobody there but Larrison and his lieutenant. All the other young men, slaves either to their lady-loves, who had returned to the chateau, or to their horses, who were in danger of taking cold, had gone, or were about going. Osmund Larrison was an amiable young man, who tried with all his might to be a Frenchman in wit and manners, but who, fortunately for himself, was at heart devotedly patriotic. Lieutenant Erwin Osborn was one of those good-natured, blunt, decided characters, who are unable even to make an effort to produce any modification in themselves. He had all the qualities of an excellent officer and citizen, with the good-nature of a man who is in perfect health, and who does not trouble himself about what does not concern him. Larrison was his friend, his leader, his idol. He followed him like his shadow, and never so much as stirred a finger without his advice. He had even consulted him in the selection of a sweetheart.

As soon as the two friends saw M. Goeffe, they hast-

ened to lay hold of him, swearing that he should not leave the hogar until he had done them the honor to drink with them. The punch was ready, and only needed to be set on fire

"I want to be able to say," cried Larrison, "that I drank in the hogar of the lake on the nights of December 26th and 27th, with two men so celebrated in different professions as M. Edmund Goeffle and Christian Waldo."

"Christian Waldo!" said M. Goeffle, "where are you going to find him?"

"There! behind you. He's disguised like a poor devil, and masked; but it's he, all the same. He has lost one of his great ugly gloves, and I recognize his white hand. I saw it at Stockholm, and observed it so attentively that I should know it again amongst a thousand! See now, M. Christian Waldo, you have a very handsome hand, but it has one peculiarity; the little finger of your left hand is slightly curved under, and you cannot quite straighten it, even when you hold your hand wide open. Do you not remember at Stockholm an officer who saw you rescue a little cabin-boy from three furious drunken sailors? It was down at the park; you had come out of your exhibition, and were still masked. Your servant had run away. The child would have been killed but for you. Do you remember it?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied Christian; "you were the officer who passed. You drew your sword, and put the drunken rascals to flight, and then insisted upon taking me with you in your carriage. If it had not been for you I might have been killed."

"Then there would have been one noble-hearted man the less," said Larrison. "Won't you give me one more shake of the hand, as you did then?"

"With all my heart!" said Christian, grasping the major's hand.

Then, removing his mask, he said to M. Goeffle:

"It is not my custom to hide my face from persons who inspire me with confidence and affection."

"What!" exclaimed the major and his lieutenant, "Christian Goeffle, our friend of last night?"

"No ; Christian Waldo, who had stolen the name of M. Goeffe, and whom M. Goeffe has been good enough to pardon for a great impertinence. I recognized you, at once last evening, major."

"Ah, very good ! You attended the ball in spite of the prejudices of the baron, who, perhaps, had not had the good taste to invite you?"

"But it is nowhere customary to receive as a guest a person who is paid by the master of the house to entertain his guests. I should really have had no reason to complain if I had been put out of doors, and it was folly in me to expose myself to such a danger. Still, I had an excuse ; my object in travelling is to observe the countries through which I pass, so as to remember and describe them. I am a sort of note-taking scribbler and observer ; by which I do not mean, however, a diplomatic spy. I study the fine arts and sciences even more than manners and customs, but I am interested in all sorts of things ; and as I have seen something of society elsewhere, I took a fancy to behold it once more in all its luxury—a strange anomaly—in the midst of the mountains and lakes and ice of a country that is apparently inaccessible. But my face seems greatly to have displeased the baron, and accordingly I wore my mask at his house to-day. You advised me last evening not to return thither at all."

"And we should so advise you still, dear Christian," said the major, "if the baron had remembered the incident of last night, but his illness appears to have made him forget it. However, look out for his servants. Cover your face again, and talk French, for here are some of them now, bringing us the punch ; they may have seen you at the ball."

A vast silver bowl, full of flaming punch, was now placed upon the table of rough granite, and the major did the honors with much spirit ; but M. Goeffe, an instant before so animated, had suddenly fallen into a brown study, and, as in the morning, seemed to be divided between the desire of making merry and that of solving some problem. . .

"What are you thinking about, my dear uncle?" said Christian, filling his glass. "Do you blame me for having thrown aside my incognito before these good friends?"

"By no means," answered the lawyer; "and if you permit, I will repeat your story succinctly to these gentlemen, so as to convince them that they are right in admitting you to their friendship."

"Yes, yes! the history of Christian Waldo!" cried the two officers. "It must be very curious; and if it ought to be kept secret, we swear upon our honor —"

"But it is too long," said Christian. "I am going to stop here at least two days longer. Let us appoint a rendezvous where it will be safer and warmer."

"Right," said M. Goefle. "Gentlemen, come and see us at Stollborg to-morrow; we will have dinner or supper together."

"But to-morrow," replied the major, "is the bear-hunt. Will you not come, both of you?"

"Both? No; I am no hunter, and I don't like bears. And it is not in Christian's line, either. Suppose a bear should bite off one of his hands; he finds two none too many to work his marionettes. Show me your hand, Christian. That is a singular crook of your little finger. I never noticed it. It is from a hurt, is it not?"

"No," said Christian; "I was born so."

And holding out his left hand, he added:

"This is the most striking; but still, both my hands have the same defect in a slight degree. However, it gives me no sort of inconvenience."

"Singular; very singular!" repeated M. Goefle, scratching his chin, as he habitually did when he was puzzled.

"Not so very singular," said Christian; "I have observed this trifling deformity in other people. For instance, I noticed it in the Baron de Waldemora, and much more obvious than in me."

"Yes, by Jove! precisely! That is just what I was thinking about. His two little fingers are quite closed down. Had you observed it, gentlemen?"

"Very often," said Larrison, "and before Christian Waldo, who gives almost all his earnings to the poor, it

may be said, without any allusion being suspected, that such closed fingers are reckoned a sign of avarice."

"And yet," said M. Goefle, "the baron is not close about money. I know it might be said, in his case, that his love of display is an additional reason for coveting riches at any cost; but his father was very disinterested, and his brother generous to excess. So the shut fingers prove nothing."

"Had the baron's father and brother this same peculiarity?" asked Christian.

"Yes, and very marked, as I have understood. And one day, as I was studying the family portraits, I was quite surprised to find several of his ancestors with the same crooked fingers. Is not that a very singular thing?"

"Let us hope," observed Christian, "that I shall never be like the baron in any other respect. But as to the bear-hunt, even if I should lose both my *deformed* hands, I am dying to be one of the party. I shall make a point of going."

"Come with us!" cried Larrson; "I will call for you in the morning."

"Early?"

"Why, certainly; before daylight."

"That is to say," said Christian, smiling, "a little before noon."

"You calumniate our sun," said the lieutenant; "it will rise in seven or eight hours from this time."

"Well, then, let's go to bed."

"To bed!" cried M. Goefle; "already? The punch wouldn't let you sleep, even then. I'm only beginning to recover from my emotion over Stangstadius's wig. Let me have time to breathe, Christian. I thought you were better company. You are not at all merry to night, do you know?"

"I confess it; I am as melancholy as an Englishman," said Christian.

"Why so, nephew? for I shall insist upon it in private that you are my nephew, though I so shamefully disowned you in public. What makes you melancholy?"

"I don't know at all, my dear uncle, unless it is that I am beginning to turn into a mountebank."

"Explain your aphorism."

"I have been travelling with my marionettes three months; it is too long. At another period of my life, which I have described to you, I followed the same occupation for about that time, and I felt — though in a less degree, for I was younger — the same result as now. I have moments of great excitement, but my spirits are correspondingly low afterwards; I think of my work with disgust and indifference; when actually performing, I am carried away by a feverish play of fancy, a sort of overflow of gayety or emotion; and as soon as I take off my mask and become an ordinary person again, I am overwhelmed with despondency and self-contempt."

"Pshaw! all that is my own case, exactly; arguing cases affects me in just that way. Every orator or actor, every artist or professional man, who is obliged to be hard at work for half his life in instructing, enlightening, or amusing others, as soon as the curtain falls, is weary of the whole human race and of himself. If I am good-humored and happy at present, it is only because I have been idle for four or five days. You should see me in my own home, on returning from court! You should hear me then, scolding at my housekeeper for not bringing the tea promptly enough, at the clients who are besieging me, at the doors of my house for creaking! Everything irritates me. Finally, I sit down in an arm-chair, take up some book of history or philosophy, or a novel, and very soon go happily to sleep in entire forgetfulness of my cursed profession."

"You sleep happily, M. Goeffe; it is because, in spite of the excitement of your nerves, you feel that you have been doing something earnest and useful."

"Hm! Hm! Not always! One cannot always argue on the right side, and even in pleading the very best cause, one cannot be always sure of using arguments that are exactly just and true. Believe me, Christian, although the saying is that no occupation is foolish, I say that all occupations are so; so it makes little difference

which of them you adopt. Do not despise your own, for such as it is, it is a hundred times more moral than mine."

"Oh! oh! M. Goefle, what a paradox that is! Come, let us hear you argue it! You can use plenty of eloquence there."

"No eloquence, my children," said M. Goefle, as the two officers and Christian urged him to give rein to his imagination; "there would be no use in sophisticating; and besides, I am taking a vacation. But I tell you in perfect good faith, that the art of story-telling is superior to all others. It is incontestably the first in point of time, for as soon as men could talk they invented mythologies, composed poems, and recited histories; and it is the first in moral usefulness, too—I am ready to maintain it against the whole university, and even Stangstadius himself, who believes nothing but what he can touch. Man never learns by experience. You may teach him authentic history as much as you please, and, in spite of it, he will continually reenact—on a higher level, if you choose, corresponding to his grade of civilization—the same faults and follies as ever. Do we even learn by our own experience? I know well enough that I shall be ill to-morrow for having played the young man to-night, and you see how much I care for it. It is not reason which controls man, it is imagination—fancy. That is, it is art, poetry, music, painting, the drama. Wait, gentlemen, let me empty my glass before I proceed to my second head."

"Your health, M. Goefle!" cried the three friends.

"And yours, my children! Well, to proceed: I do not consider Christian Waldo as a showman of marionettes? What is a marionette? A bit of wood covered with a rag. It is the intellect and the soul of Christian which give interest and significance to his pieces. I look on him as not merely an actor, for he has to do something more than vary his accent and change his voice every moment, in order to move his audience; that is a mere trick of his trade. He is an author as well, for his plays are little masterpieces. They remind one of those short, exquisite musical pieces which illustrious composers of the

Italian and German schools have written for theatres like his. 'Music for children,' they modestly call it, but it has always been the delight of connoisseurs. Then, gentlemen, let us render justice to Christian Waldo."

"Yes! yes!" cried the two officers, enthusiastic under the influence of their punch; "long live Christian Waldo! He is a man of genius!"

"Not at all," said Christian, laughing, "but I see now what makes my uncle despise the profession of law so much. It enables him to maintain, and to make other people believe, the most enormous misrepresentations."

"Hush, nephew! It's not your turn to speak! I say—but, Christian, you are an ungrateful fellow! You are not a lawyer, and yet you complain! You can investigate the abstract truth embodied in all kinds of fictions, and yet you grow tired of making men love it! You possess intellect, a good heart, education, and knowledge of the world, and here you are calling yourself a mountebank, just to depreciate your work, and perhaps to abandon it! Wretch! is that your purpose?"

"Yes, that is my intention," said Christian, "I have had enough of it. I did suppose I could keep it up longer, but I find that my constant incognito wearies me; it seems discreditable to a man of my real character. I must find the means of travelling without begging. I have already devoted much thought to this subject—it is a great problem to a man without means. A person who lives in one place can always find work; he who desires to move about, finds it difficult to do so, nowadays. In ancient times, M. Goefle, to travel was to make conquest of the earth for the good of humanity; it was recognized as a high mission, as the vocation of superior minds. The traveller, accordingly, was a sacred being in the eyes of all people. They greeted his arrival with respect, and resorted to him for news of other countries, and of the general progress of humanity. At present, if the traveller has not sufficient means of his own, he must become either a beggar, a thief, or a strolling player."

"Why do you use such a contemptuous term?" said M. Goefle; "the object of the actor (I should prefer to

call him interpreter, since his object is to interpret works of the imagination) is to lead men's minds away from the merely practical; and since the majority of our stupid race are essentially prosaic, and absorbed in their material interests, the tyrants who govern public opinion discourage both poets and their interpreters. If they dared, they would still more emphatically discourage preachers, who speak to them of heaven, and religion, which wars against selfish passions, and is, in fact, a system of idealism. No one objects to idealism when presented as a revealed truth, for no one dares. But it is promptly rejected when it only says, 'I come to demonstrate to you the beautiful and good, by means of symbols and fables.'

"And yet," said Christian, "the sacred books are full of apologies. It is the preaching suited to an age of faith and simplicity. But it does not seem to me, M. Goefle, that the cause of the prejudice is exactly where you have placed it, or if it be, it is only in virtue of a fact to which I would draw your attention. The actor has no real connection with the rest of society. He does nothing intrinsically useful as an actor, and men's valuations of each other are based upon an exchange of services intrinsically useful. Remember, all the other professions are intimately concerned with the destiny of every individual in society, even that of the priest; for even to infidels he is still an official indispensable to their civic state. Other professional persons are each, at one time or another, the hope or support of every man. To the physician, he looks for health; the lawyer represents the gaining of his cause; the speculator is to give him a fortune; the tradesman provides him provisions; the soldier protects him; the scientific man promotes the success of his business by making discoveries; the professor of any of the branches of human knowledge is ready to instruct him for some employment or other; the actor alone discourses upon all subjects, but supplies him with nothing—unless it be good advice, which the auditor had to pay for at the door, when he could have given it to himself gratis."

"Well, well!" cried M. Goefle, "what are you quibbling about, then? We agree perfectly—you are only

proving what I said. The vulgar always despise imagination and sentiment."

"Not exactly that, M. Goeffe. It is unfruitful sentiment—unproductive imagination—which they despise! There is a good deal of justice in the opinion of the bourgeois, who might say to the actor, 'You discourse to me about virtue, love, devotion, reason, courage, happiness! Yes, for that is your trade; but since this is all you can do, you must not object to being set down by me as an idle babbler. If you are anything more, come down from your platform, and help me to arrange my own affairs as well as you arrange the plots of your plays. Cure my gout; gain my lawsuit; enrich my firm; marry my daughter to the man she loves; find a good position for my son-in-law. If you can't do any of these things, make me a pair of shoes, pave my court-yard. Do something or other to earn the money I have paid you.'"

"And you conclude from this?" said M. Goeffe.

"I conclude that every one ought to have an employment in which he can be directly useful to others; and that the prejudice which prevails against actors will cease at once, when theatres shall be free institutions, and when all persons of ability and dramatic gifts shall be prepared to do their part as actors for the love of art, whenever they may be called upon, whatever may be their usual occupation."

"Well, anyhow, that is a dream that goes far beyond any of my paradoxes."

"I don't deny it; but nobody believed in the existence of America two hundred years ago; and it is my opinion that in two hundred years more, we shall see things far more extraordinary than we dream of now in our wildest imaginings."

This conclusion reached, the friends drank the remainder of the punch, and Christian would have taken leave of M. Goeffe, who seemed inclined to go and dance a *courante* at the new chateau with the young officers. However, the doctor of laws would not part from his young friend, who was really in need of rest; and after having agreed to meet next day, or rather the same day,

for it was now two o'clock in the morning, the party went in search of their respective vehicles.

"Well, Christian," said M. Goeffe, when they were seated side by side in the sleigh, on their way back to Stollborg, "were you in earnest in what you said about?—by the way, I notice that I have fallen into a habit, I don't know how, of addressing you very familiarly by your given name."

"Please to continue it, M. Goeffe, it is very pleasant to me."

"But I am not old enough to take liberties of that kind—I am not sixty yet, Christian; I don't want you to consider me a patriarch."

"God forbid! But I considered the liberty you speak of as a mark of friendship."

"So it is, my son. Well, in that case I will let ceremony go; tell me—"

Here M. Goeffe paused so long that Christian thought he was asleep; but he aroused himself, and said suddenly:

"Tell me, Christian, if you were rich what would you do with your money?"

"Do?" said the young man, surprised; "I should try to make as many people as possible partakers in my happiness."

"Then it would make you happy?"

"Yes. I would make a voyage round the world."

"And then?"

"Then?—I don't know—I would write an account of my travels."

"And then?"

"I would marry, and have some children. I am very fond of children."

"And would you leave Sweden?"

"Who knows? I have no ties to bind me anywhere. The deuce take me if—don't think I am exaggerating, for I am not intoxicated—but, M. Goeffe, I feel a very warm affection for you, and I'll be hanged if the pleasure of living near you would not have a great deal to do with forming my resolution! But what is the use

of talking about it? I have no taste for building castles in Spain, and have never anticipated being rich. In two days I shall go, I don't know whither, and perhaps shall never return."

When the two friends reached the bear-room, they had so entirely forgotten about its being haunted, that they went to bed and to sleep, without even remembering to renew their consultation concerning the apparition of the previous night.

They tried, for a while, to keep on talking after they had gone to bed; but, though M. Goeffe was still somewhat excited, and though Christian answered his remarks with all the good-nature in the world, sleep very soon descended upon the young man like an avalanche of feathers; and the doctor, after scolding a little at Nils, who was snoring loud enough to break the windows, finally went to sleep himself.

It was at just about this time that the Baron de Waldemora awoke, at the new chateau. Johan, on entering the room according to order, found him sitting on the bed, half dressed.

"It is three o'clock, your lordship," said the majordomo; "have you had any sleep?"

"I have slept, Johan, but very poorly; I have been dreaming about those puppets all night long."

"Well, my dear master, your dreams can't have been very sad, then. Those puppets were very amusing."

"You thought so, did you? Oh, very well!"

"Why, you laughed at them yourself."

"Oh yes; one must always laugh, of course. Life is one long, perpetual laugh. A melancholy one, Johan!"

"Ah, master, no black thoughts! What are your orders?"

"None. If I am to die to-day, who can hinder it?"

"Die? What the devil put that into your head? You are looking capitally this morning."

"But if I should be assassinated?"

"Who would think of any such thing?"

"A good many people. And especially the unknown

who came to the ball; he whose face and whose threat—”

“That counterfeit nephew of the advocate? I can’t imagine why that fellow’s face should torment you so. It was not in the least like—”

“Be still! you never saw clearly in your life; you are near-sighted!”

“No I am not, indeed.”

“A man insolent enough to look me in the face and defy me, in my own house, before everybody!”

“You have been served so more than once before, and have always laughed at it.”

“And this time I fell, as if struck by a thunderbolt.”

“It’s that cursed anniversary. You know it makes you ill every year; and afterwards you forget all about it.”

“I don’t reproach myself for anything, Johan.”

“The devil! Did you think I was reproaching you for anything?”

“But what can be the matter with this poor head of mine, to make me have these visions?”

“Pshaw! It’s the height of the cold season; everybody sees them.”

“Do you ever?”

“I? no, never. I eat a great deal; but you—you eat nothing at all. By the way, you ought to have something now; some tea, at least.”

“Not yet. What do you think of this Italian’s story?”

“That Tebaldo? You haven’t told me the first word of it.”

“Very true. Well, I will not, either.”

“Why?”

“It’s too absurd. Still—do you believe Lawyer Goefle is my enemy? He may be.”

“I can’t see why.”

“Nor I either. I have always paid him handsomely, and his father was quite devoted to me.”

“And besides, M. Goefle is a man of mind; a fine speaker; a man of the world, and without prejudices, believe me.”

"You are mistaken. He will not bring suit against Rosenstein. He says I am in the wrong; he opposed me yesterday. I hate that Goeffe!"

"Already? Pshaw! wait a little. Offer him an uncommonly large fee, and he'll find out that you are in the right, after all."

"I did; and got a very disagreeable answer. I tell you I hate him!"

"Very well, then — what do you choose to have *happen to him?*"

"I don't know yet. We will see. But old Stenson?"

"Old Stenson? What about him?"

"Do you believe he could have betrayed me?"

"When?"

"That is not what I asked you. Do you think him capable of dissimulation?"

"I think he's an idiot."

"You are an idiot yourself. He is shrewder than you, or than I either, perhaps. Ah! if that Italian's story should be true!"

"Then you don't mean that I shall know it? Very well; go on tormenting yourself. Make your own investigations, and let me go back to bed."

"Johan, you are scolding me!" said the baron, with extraordinary mildness. "Be satisfied; you shall know all."

"Oh yes; when you want something of me!"

"I shall want you immediately. This Italian must be made to produce his proofs, if he has any. Was nothing found on him?"

"Nothing. I searched him myself."

"He told me that he did not have them with him. And what could he have had? Do you remember that Manasses?"

"I should think so! That old fellow who used to sell his merchandise here; and at high prices, too!"

"He is dead."

"All the same to me."

"This Italian killed him."

"What a ridiculous idea! For what?"

"To rob him, probably, and to get a certain letter."

"From whom?"

"Stenson."

"An interesting one?"

"Why yes, most certainly, if it contains what this rascal pretends it does."

"Well, tell me what it was, if you want me to understand."

The baron and his confidant continued their conversation, but in such low tones that the walls themselves could not have overheard them. The baron was agitated; Johan shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," said the latter, when his master concluded, "it's a story that would put you to sleep standing up. This blackguard of a Tebaldo has forged it from the reports that are circulating through the country, so as to make money out of you."

"He says that he never put foot in Sweden before yesterday, and that he came direct from Holland by way of Dronthiem."

"Possibly; but what of that? He may have picked up his information accidentally somewhere in the neighborhood. So many stories are told about you! And perhaps, in some of his travels, he really did meet this old Manasses, who knew all about them before."

"Well, what shall we do about it?"

"You must frighten M. Italian, and not allow yourself to be black-mailed. You must promise him —"

"How much?"

"Two or three hours in our *chamber of roses*."

"He will think it a mere threat. He has heard, no doubt, that racks and wheels were abolished in Sweden, under the old bishop."

"Do you suppose the captain of the great tower needs any such old rubbish to help him find a tongue in a man of flesh and bones?"

"Then you think —"

"Cover him all up with roses until he confesses that he has lied, or else tells where he has concealed his evidence."

"Impossible! He will yell, and the castle is full of people."

"But the hunt? You must go to it whether alive or dead; every one will follow you."

"Somebody always stays, if it be only some one's servants. And then the old women—they will be whispering about that I am exerting an authority which the state has strictly reserved for itself."

"Oh, nonsense! Don't trouble yourself about them. Besides, I will arrange all that; I will say it is a poor devil whose leg has been crushed, and who is being operated upon."

"And will you receive his information?"

"Certainly. Who else."

"I should prefer to be there myself."

"You know you are so soft-hearted that you can't bear to see any one in pain."

"Very true; it puts my stomach and bowels out of order. Well, I'll be off at the hunt."

"Do so; and in the meanwhile go to sleep again. I will see to everything."

"And will you find the unknown?"

"He must be a confederate of this fellow. We shall only find him through Tebaldo's confessions."

"Right; it must be so, for he offered to deliver him up to me — But it may not be the same man?"

"Well, I will confess him thoroughly on all points, so sleep in peace."

"Have you kept your Italian fasting?"

"Why, of course!"

"Go, then; I will try to get a little more sleep. You have done me a great deal of good, Johan. You always have suggestions to make. For my part, I am failing. *Mon Dieu!* How fast I have grown old."

Johan now departed, directing Jacob to call his lordship at eight. Jacob was a valet-de-chambre who always slept in a room next the baron's sleeping-room. He was an honest fellow, to whom the baron had always played the part of a good master; for he knew how important it is to have some trustworthy people about one,

if only for the sake of sleeping without fear, under their guard.

Christian, in the meanwhile, who always slept well, wherever or in whatever company he was, awoke after about six hours' rest, and arose softly, to look out at the sky. It was not yet daylight, but as the young man was about to lie down again, he remembered the hunting-party, which they were probably already beginning to organize at the new chateau. Christian was no hunter, except with reference to natural history. He was a capital shot, but had never had a passion for slaughtering game merely to kill time and show his skill; but a bear-hunt was something new, picturesque, and also interesting from a zoölogical point of view. At the thought of it he was instantly wide awake, and fully intent upon witnessing this novel spectacle, although he might possibly find it necessary to return before it was quite over, in order to prepare for his evening's performance with M. Goeffe.

Before going to sleep, he had said something on the subject to the doctor of laws, but he was opposed to his going, since he did not care anything about the hunt himself. Christian accordingly foresaw that his good uncle would try to stop him, and, knowing his own compliant disposition, he also foresaw that he should yield.

"Pshaw!" he said to himself; "I had better slip off quietly, and leave a couple of words in pencil for him, to keep him from being uneasy. He will, perhaps, be a little annoyed, and he will not like breakfasting alone, but he has still some work to do; he has to visit old Stenson again, and I shall probably be back before he begins to feel lonely."

So Christian stepped softly from the guard-room to the bear-room, where he dressed himself. Then, after putting on his mask under his hat, partly from habit and partly as a precaution, he went out by way of the *gaard*, now plunged in silence and darkness. Thence, passing through the fruit-garden, standing in its wintry desolation, he reached the lake, and finding that he was much nearer the shore at this point than if he had descended

by the path on the northern side, he crossed the narrow space of ice, and proceeded by land towards the new chateau.

At this very moment, Johan was advancing across the lake from the opposite direction; without the least suspicion of the recent flight of his game, he was coming to take up his post of observation at Stollborg.

XII.

CHRISTIAN did not expect to find the major at the new chateau. He knew that the young officer, after the evening's entertainment at the chateau, went every night, or rather every morning, to his bostoele, which was only a little way off. He had not thought to ask him in what direction his country-house was, and he made no effort, therefore, to find it. It was merely his intention to watch the preparations for the hunt at a distance, and to mix among the peasants who were engaged in the general battue.

He was still following the path along the shore of the lake, when, by the glimmering light of the dawn which was just beginning to appear, he saw a man coming to meet him. He lowered his mask at once, but raised it almost immediately, on recognizing Lieutenant Osburn.

"Upon my word," said the latter, as they shook hands, "I am delighted to find you here; I was going in search of you, and we shall gain half an hour's time by this meeting. Come, make haste! the major is close at hand waiting for us."

They proceeded in the direction from which Erwin Osburn had just come; he took the lead, and very soon turned into a path leading up the left side of the mountain. When Christian, who followed, had ascended this path, which was quite steep, for a few minutes, he saw two sleighs standing motionless in a narrow ravine beneath him. The major, who was in one of them, saw

him at the same time, and ran forward with a pleased expression.

"Bravo!" he cried; "you are punctual by inspiration! How the devil did you know that we were here?"

"I had no idea of such a thing," replied Christian; "I was going to the new chateau merely by chance."

"Then chance is for us the first thing in the morning; and that is a sign that we shall be fortunate in the hunt. Really, you are capitally disguised, just as you were yesterday evening; but you have neither the proper shoes nor weapons for the present occasion. Luckily I foresaw that it would be so, and we have brought all that you will want. In the meanwhile, take this cloak as a protection against the cold, and let us start instantly. We are going quite a distance, and the day will not be too long for all we have to do."

Christian stepped, with Larrison, into one of the small country sleighs, very light, with seats for two, and drawn by a little mountain horse. The lieutenant and Corporal Duff, a kind-hearted old man, a non-commissioned officer, and a great expert in hunting, got into the second sleigh, which was exactly like it. The major took the lead, and they started at a rapid canter.

"You must know," the major said to Christian, "that we are making all this haste so as to have a private hunt of our own. The baron has plenty of game, and plenty of skilful marksmen upon his domain, and he himself is a very accomplished and very courageous hunter. But as he will be obliged to conduct or send a great many of his guests to the battue to-day, who are more remarkable for their boasting than their skill, it is much to be feared that they will make a great deal of noise, and do very little execution. Besides, the battue with peasants has no great interest, as you can see for yourself, when we return down that mountain that you see before you, after having made our expedition. It is really a sort of cowardly assassination. They surround the poor bear, who is not always willing to leave his den; they terrify him, they harrass him, and when he comes out at last to fight or fly, they shoot at him without the least danger, from be-

hind strong nets, where they are protected from his desperate attacks. Of course there can be nothing exciting, nothing unexpected or startling in a hunt conducted in this way; and besides, it often happens that the impatient and awkward members of the party make the whole thing fail, and that the beast has packed off before they can come up to it. We shall go to work in a very different way, without trackers, without noise, and without dogs. I will tell you what is to be done, when the right time comes. And you may rest assured that a real hunt is like all true pleasures; it does not admit of a crowd. It is a noble diversion, which you can only enjoy with your friends, or persons of exceptional merit."

"I must thank you doubly, then," replied Christian, "for wishing me to share with you this confidential pleasure; but pray explain to me how it is that you are at liberty to kill the baron's game before him. I should have thought he would be more jealous of his prerogatives as a hunter, and of his rights as a proprietor."

"For that very reason it is not his game that we are going to try and kill. His estates are considerable, but the whole country does not belong to him, God be praised! Do you see those fine mountains directly in front of you? that is the Norwegian frontier, and on the outskirts of those gigantic ramparts we shall find a group called *Blaakdal*. There, in the midst of those sublime wildernesses, and sometimes enveloped by clouds, for the summits of the mountains are not often so clear as they are to-day, live a few free peasants, who are landowners. From one of these *dannemans* (that is what they are called) my friends and myself have purchased a bear, whose retreat he has just discovered. This *danneman*, whose familiarity with all such matters makes him a very interesting man, lives in a magnificent site, which is almost inaccessible to a carriage, but, with the help of God and these good little mountain-horses, we shall get there. We will breakfast at his house, after which he himself will be our guide to his lordship the bear, who—since he has not been tracked beforehand by babblers and reckless fools—will await us without mistrust, and receive us

—according to his mood at the moment. But look, Christian, see what a beautiful spectacle! Have you already beheld this phenomenon?”

“No, not yet,” cried Christian, transported with joy; “and I am very glad to see it in your company. I have heard of it, and that is all; it is a magnificent parhelion!”

In fact, five suns were rising above the horizon. The true, the powerful star of day was accompanied to the right and left, and on either side of its radiant disk, by four luminous images, not so brilliant, and not so round as the real sun, but surrounded by rainbow-hued halos of marvellous beauty. As our hunters were riding towards the west, they stopped for several moments to enjoy this optical effect, which is produced by very much the same causes as the rainbow, although it is scarcely ever seen in Europe, except in the extreme north.

At first they drove along a broad highway, but this soon dwindled into a narrow, uneven lane, leading through private estates; the lane turned into a path, and then followed the open country, uncultivated and rugged, with only a few scarcely perceptible tracks cut into the snow along the hill-sides. After this, Larrson, who understood perfectly both the country and the capabilities of the sleigh he was driving, dashed forward into a really terrific region, over the bare sides of the mountain; on he went, careering along the very edge of precipices, slipping at full speed into the bottom of almost perpendicular ravines, jumping ditches at a flying leap, shooting over fallen trees and tottering rocks, without even condescending to avoid these fearful obstacles, which seemed every moment as if they would shiver the fragile sleigh into fragments. Christian did not know whether to admire most the audacity of the major or the skill and courage of the thin little horse, whose marvellous instinct was like a sort of second sight, and which the driver accordingly allowed to go its own way. Twice, however, the sleigh was upset. It was not the fault of the horse, but of the vehicle, which could not accommodate itself quickly enough to his movements, in spite of its ingenious construction. These overturns are sometimes serious; but

they are so frequent that very few of them, in comparison with the number that occur, amount to anything. The lieutenant's sleigh, although he was warned by the accidents befalling the party in advance, as they cut their way through the ice, was also upset two or three times. The young men rolled in the snow, shook themselves, replaced the sleigh upon its runners, and started again, without thinking anything more of the adventure than if they had got out to lighten the load of the horse a little. In other countries, an upset makes people laugh or tremble; here, it is accepted quietly, as one of the things that are anticipated and inevitable.

Christian experienced a feeling of unspeakable content, of inward peace, during this exciting race.

"I cannot express to you," he said to the good major, who was really like a brother in his kindness and devotion, "how happy I am to-day!"

"God be praised! dear Christian, for last night you were melancholy."

"It was the darkness that made me so: the lake, whose beautiful covering of snow had been soiled by the race, and which looked like a mass of lead under our feet. It was the hogar, lighted by torches as gloomy as funereal torches gleaming over a tomb. It was that barbarous statue of Odin, which, with its threatening hammer and its formless arm, seemed to be hurling down some mysterious malediction upon the new world — no longer subject to his power — and upon our profane band! The whole scene was beautiful, but yet terrible; my imagination is vivid, and then—"

"And then, confess," said the major; "something was troubling you."

"Perhaps so; a dream, a foolish fancy which the return of the sun has dissipated. Yes, major, the sun exerts as beneficent an influence upon the spirit of man as upon his body. It illumines the soul as well as the natural world. This strangely beautiful and fantastic sun of the north is still the same as the glowing sun of Italy, and the mild sun of France. It does not give so much heat, but I imagine that it gives even more light

than elsewhere, in this country of silver and crystal! All nature is its mirror, even the atmosphere, in these regions of immaculate ice. Blessed be the sunshine! Don't you agree with me, major? And blessed be you, also, for bringing me with you on this revivifying drive, which inspires and strengthens me. Yes, yes, this is the life that suits me! — movement, air, warmth, cold, light! The world before you, a horse, a sleigh, a ship — pshaw! still less, legs, wings, liberty!”

“You are a strange being, Christian! For my part, I should prefer, to all that, a woman whom I loved.”

“Well,” said Christian, “and I too, perhaps! I am not strange at all; but you must be able to support your family, or else remain a bachelor. What would you have me do with nothing? Unable to dream of happiness, I have at least the consolation of knowing how to forget my deprivations, and of feeling a sincere enthusiasm for the austere joys that are within my reach. Do not talk to me about a family, and the corner of a fire-side. Let me dream of the free wind wafting you towards unknown shores — I know, dear friend, that man is made to love! I feel it deeply at this very moment, by the side of a person who has received me like a brother, and whom I must leave to-morrow, perhaps forever; but, since it is my destiny to be unable to establish any ties, in any place, since I have neither country, nor family, nor position in this world, the whole secret of my courage lies in the faculty I have acquired of enjoying happiness on the wing, and of forgetting that the morrow will inevitably sweep it away like a beautiful dream. And besides, I have reflected a great deal since we drank our punch in the grotto of the hogar.”

“Poor fellow! you must be in love, for you have not slept.”

“Whether in love or not, I slept the sleep of the innocent; but one reflects quickly when he has not many hours to lose in life. While dressing myself, and while coming from Stollborg to join you, I was deeply impressed by one plain and simple truth. This is that I have made a mistake in trying to solve the problem of

the wandering artist's career. I have reasoned like a spoiled child of civilization, and have been unwilling to resign the enjoyments of the sybarite. But let me explain myself more clearly — ”

Christian, now, without relating the material facts of his life to the major, gave him a brief sketch of his inclinations, desires, weaknesses, and the progress of his moral and intellectual life, and explained to him how it was that he had tried to become an artist, so that he might continue to devote himself actively to the service of science.

“ Now, my dear Osmund,” he added, “ to be an artist, you must be that and nothing else ; you must sacrifice travels, scientific studies, and liberty to that end. In my case, since I have not been willing to make these sacrifices, why should I not content myself with being simply and plainly an artisan without an art, such as any man in good health may become at any given moment of his life ? I want to study the entrails of the earth ; cannot I become a miner, for a month, in some mine ? I want to study the flora of a given locality and zoölogy ; can I not engage for a season as a pioneer or huntsman in that region ? And the next season, can I not push on further, living in poverty in the meanwhile, so as to use my arms and legs for advancing my knowledge, instead of exhausting my mind in pasquinades, for the sake of obtaining more quickly better food and finer clothes ? Have I not sufficient moral courage to work with my hands, so as to have my mind at liberty, and, in a modest way, productive ? I have thought a great deal about the life of your great Linnæus, which is a résumé of the history of almost all the scientific men of our period. Poverty, the actual want of bread, has done all that it could with most of them, to check their development, and compel them to leave their works unknown or incomplete. In their youth they have all been wanderers like myself, anxious about the morrow, with no other hope than the chance of meeting intelligent patrons. And even when they have received some benefit — a bitter thing in itself — how often have they been obliged to interrupt their pursuits, in order to

occupy themselves with petty duties, which are conferred upon them as a favor, but which consume their precious time, and prevent, or delay, their discoveries. Very well, why did they not do what I am proposing, and what I intend to do; take a hammer or a spade over their shoulders, and go and excavate the rock, or till the soil? What do I want with books, or pen and ink? Why should I be so eager to make known my existence to the learned world, before having something new and really interesting to communicate? I know enough now to begin to learn, that is, to observe and study Nature for her own sake. We know well that sublime secrets have been wrested from the very elements, as it were, by poor illiterate workmen, in whom God had planted, like a sacred spark, the genius of observation. And do you suppose, Major Larrison, that a man loving nature passionately as I do, would lose his zeal and vigilance because obliged to eat black bread and sleep upon a bed of straw? In observing the structure of the rocks and the nature of the soil, might he not seize some idea that would prove useful in developing and improving — stay, these porphyry rocks which surround us, or these uncultivated fields which we are crossing? I am sure that there are sources of wealth everywhere, that man will gradually discover. To be useful to all, that is the glorious ideal of the artisan, dear Osmund; to be agreeable to the rich, is the puerile destiny of the artist; and I escape from it with joy."

"What!" said the major, astonished; "are you serious, Christian, in wishing to renounce the agreeable arts, in which you excel, the refinements of life, which, with your brilliant gifts, you could easily command, the charms of society, where it only depends upon yourself to reappear on the most advantageous and agreeable footing, by accepting employment, as a superintendent, we will say, of some court entertainment? You have only to desire it, and you would quickly secure powerful friends, who could easily make you the manager of a theatre, or the director of a museum. If you wish — my family is noble, and has relations —."

"No, no, major! Thanks! That would have been well enough yesterday morning; I was still a child then, seeking his road while playing truant from school; I should, perhaps, have accepted your proposition. The ball had led me back to the old life, to the old worldly vanities to which I have already too often yielded. To-day I am a man, who sees where duty points him. I do not know what ray has penetrated my soul with this morning sunshine —"

Christian sank into a reverie. He asked himself what association of ideas had led him to form resolutions so simple and energetic; but it was useless for him to question himself, and attribute this new inspiration entirely to the influence of a good night's sleep and a beautiful morning; one image constantly arose before him, that of Margaret hiding her face in her hands at the name of Christian Waldo. That stifled cry, breaking from her woman's heart, had struck the proud breast of Christian Goffredi. It had lingered in his ears, it had filled his soul with a generous shame, with a sudden and inflexible courage.

"And why, let me ask you," he replied to the major, who reminded him how fatiguing and tiresome physical labor is, "why must I have amusement and repose, and be exempted from any sort of suffering? Since my birth did not give me a place among the privileged classes, what have I to depend upon, if I have not courage enough to make an honorable position for myself? Those who gave me birth? If they were here before me they might very well reply, that, having made me strong and healthy, they had no idea of rendering me delicate and lazy, and that, if fine carpets to walk on and delicacies to eat are really indispensable to sustain my strength and keep me in good-humor, it had been quite impossible for them to foresee this strange and absurd contingency."

"You are laughing, Christian," said the major; "for life, without its superfluities, is not worth the trouble of living. Should not man's aim be to build himself a nest with care and foresight, of which the very birds set him an example?"

“Yes, major, it should be the aim of such men as you, whose future is linked in with his past. But there is nothing edifying in my past life, and when I became an *interpreter*, as M. Goesse calls it, do you know what the real motive was that influenced me? Most assuredly, though I did not know it myself, it was the fear of what is called poverty. Now, such a fear in a man who has only himself to care for, is cowardly. Only think how absurd a lamentation on that score would sound in the mouth of a man so well formed and healthy as I am! Stay! imagine one of my marionettes soliloquizing; our friend Stentarello, for instance, speaking in all artlessness: ‘Alas, miserable me! three times unfortunate! I can no longer sleep in sheets of the finest linen! Alas! I can no longer, when I am warm in Italy, take a glass of vanilla ice cream; or, when I am cold in Sweden, pour first-class rum into my tea! Alas! I can no longer dance at balls in lavender-colored silk; no more lace sleeves to set off my white hand. Miserable me! I can no longer cover my hair with powder scented with violet, and with pomade scented with tuberoses! Oh, stars, behold my deplorable destiny! So pretty, so charming, so amiable as I am, and yet I can have no more preserves served in china plates; no more *moiré* ribbons to tie my queue; no more gold buckles to my shoes! Blind fortune, cursed society! you certainly owe me as much as that, and to Christian Waldo too, who makes his marionettes talk and gesticulate so well.’”

Larrson could not help laughing at Christian’s gayety.

“You are a droll fellow,” he said; “at some moments you seem to me paradoxical, and then again I ask myself whether you are not as great a sage as Diogenes, breaking his cup so as to drink at the fountain-head — in the brook itself.”

“Diogenes!” said Christian, “many thanks! That cynic has always seemed to me a conceited fool. In any event, if he was really a philosopher, and wished to prove to the men of his time that it is possible to be happy and free without material comforts, he forgot the fundamental principle of his doctrine: namely, that no

one can be free and happy without some useful employment; a truth that belongs to every age. To limit yourself to the bare necessities of life, so as to devote time and strength to a generous task, cannot be called a sacrifice; it is conquering your own self-respect, securing the peace of your soul. But, without this aim, stoicism is mere foolishness; the doctrine that people should do nothing but amuse themselves, is certainly much more sensible and agreeable."

While talking thus, our hunters came in sight of the rustic abode where they were expected. It fitted in so well with the natural terraces of the mountain, that, but for the smoke escaping from the chimney, it would have been difficult to distinguish it at any distance.

"You are about to see a very worthy man," said the major to Christian, "a type of Dalecarlian simplicity and pride. There is, however, a very disagreeable person in his house, but perhaps we shall not see her to-day."

"So much the worse!" answered Christian; "I am curious about all the people, as well as about all the things in this strange country. Who is this disagreeable person?"

"A sister of the danneman, an old woman, either an idiot or crazy, who is said to have been beautiful in former years, and about whom they tell all sorts of queer stories. It is said that she had a child by Baron Olaus, and that the baroness, his wife (the same whom he now wears in a ring), out of retrospective jealousy, had the child carried off and destroyed. This may be the cause of the poor woman's unsettled mind. However, I can't guarantee the truth of the story, and I feel very little interest in a creature who could allow herself to be vanquished by the charms of the Snow Man. She is sometimes very tiresome with her songs and sayings, and then again she is either invisible or mute. I hope this will be the case to-day. But here we are. Go in quickly and warm yourself, while the corporal and lieutenant unpack our provisions."

The danneman, Joë Boetsoi, was standing at his

threshold. He was a fine man, of some forty-five years, with hard features, contrasting strangely with his kindly and straightforward expression. He was dressed with great neatness, and he came forward rather slowly, with his hat on his head, an air of simple dignity, and his hand extended.

"Welcome!" he said to the major; "thy friends are mine." The Dalecarlian peasant addresses every one, even the king himself, in the second person.

He turned immediately to the other young men, and shook hands with Christian, Osburn, and the corporal.

"I was expecting you," he said, "and yet you must not expect to find much in my house in the way of food. You know, Major Larrison, that the country is poor; but all that I have is at the disposition of yourself and friends."

"Don't put yourself out at all, Danneman Bœtsoi," replied the major; "if I had come alone, I should have asked for some of your gruel and bier; but, since I have brought three of my friends with me, I laid in a stock of provisions beforehand, so as not to cause you any inconvenience."

A discussion in Dalecarlian followed, between the officer and the peasant; Christian did not understand it, but the lieutenant explained it to him as they opened the baskets.

"We very wisely brought our own provisions," he said, "so as to have a decent breakfast in this hut; but the worthy peasant, though excusing himself for having nothing good to offer us, has really gone to some expense for our entertainment, and it is easy to see, from his long face, that he feels wounded by our precaution, which seems to him to cast a doubt upon his hospitality."

"In that case," said Christian, "do not let us mortify this honest man; let us keep our provisions, and eat what he has prepared for us. His house seems clean, and here are his daughters, ugly enough, it is true, but very elegant, and all ready to wait upon the table."

"Suppose we make a compromise," replied the lieutenant. "We will have everything served in common

and invite the family to accept our food, at the same time that we take theirs. I will go and propose that to the danneman—always if the major approves.”

The lieutenant never formed any resolution whatever without this restriction.

The major approved of the proposition, and made it himself to the danneman, who accepted it, although he still seemed a little dissatisfied.

“So,” he said, with an uneasy smile, “it will be like a wedding-feast, where each one brings his own dish.”

At any rate, he accepted; but, in spite of Christian’s hints, they did not even suggest inviting the women to sit down. This was too much opposed to established customs; the young officers would have been afraid of appearing ridiculous in proposing to the danneman such a great infraction of his dignity as head of the family.

While they were unpacking on the one hand, and talking on the other, Christian examined the house within and without. It was the same sort of building that he had already noticed in the *gaard* at Stollborg: the body of the house was made of pine logs, well caulked with moss, and painted, on the outside, of an iron-rust red; the roof was of birch-bark, overlaid with earth and turf. As there was danger that the snow, which was very plentiful in this mountainous region, would break down the roof, it had been carefully swept off, and the danneman’s goat, a third larger than the same animal in southern countries, was uttering a plaintive bleating at the sight of the fresh grass thus disclosed to view.

It was so warm within doors, that the young men threw off their pelisses and hats, and went about in their shirt-sleeves. Although substantial and spacious in comparison with a great many habitations in the locality, this house was, nevertheless, quite small; but its form was elegant, and the outside porch, over which the edge of the roof projected, gave it the comfortable and picturesque appearance of a Swiss chalet. One single room, protected from the cold by a narrow vestibule, proved sufficient for the whole family, which consisted of the danneman, who was a widower, his sister, a son fifteen

years old, and two daughters somewhat older. The stove was in the form of a cylinder, and was built of Dutch bricks, four feet high; the chimney was attached to it, and the whole stood in the centre of the house. The bare ground, instead of a carpet, was covered with pine-boughs, that exhaled an agreeable and healthful odor.

Christian wondered where all the family slept, for he saw only two beds in recesses in the wall, like berths in a ship. His friends explained to him that these were the beds of the danneman and his sister. The children slept on benches, with no other covering than fur cloaks.

"In other respects," said the major to Christian, who inquired curiously about all their habits, "though they are faithful to the rude customs of our mountaineers of pure race, you will find, also, that they have luxuries of their own, due to the labors of our host and the plentifulness of game in these, savage places. I told you that Danneman Bøtsoi was a skilful and experienced hunter; but you must know that he is skilful not only in tracking savage beasts, but also in killing them without damaging their skins, and in preparing and preserving their precious remains. We always apply to him when we want a good and handsome article at a fair price: skins of the sucking doe, for instance, which, for the summer, make the coolest and most delicious bed in the world, and which wash like linen; skins of the long-haired black bear, for lining sleighs; and seal-skin cloaks, impervious to the rain, to the snow, and, above all, to the interminable autumn fogs, which are exceedingly penetrating and unhealthy. Still further, he has rarities and even curiosities in the way of furs to dispose of, for Joë Bøtsoi has travelled a great deal in still colder regions than this, and he is in communication with hunters, who send him the objects of his traffic by wandering Laplanders and Norwegian traders; northern caravans, in which the camel is replaced by the reindeer, and whose trade, for the most part, consists merely in an exchange of commodities, after the manner of the ancients."

Christian was curious to see these furs. The danne-

man, thinking he wanted to purchase some of them, led him and the major to a little shed, where the skins were hanging up. He begged Larrson to dispose of one or all of them to the satisfaction of his friend, and would not consent to be informed of the price of sale agreed upon, before receiving it.

"You understand the business as well as I do," he said, "and you are master in my house."

Osmund translated these words to Christian, who admired the simple dignity of the Dalecarlian, and inquired whether he would show equal confidence in any one who might claim his hospitality.

"He has usually a great deal of faith," replied the major, "for the manners here are patriarchal. The Dalecarlian, the Swiss of the north, has great and heroic virtues; but the country he lives in is poor. Our mines draw vagabonds from all parts of the country; and criminals, concealed in this subterranean world, often avoid, for a long time, the punishments pronounced against them in other provinces. The peasant, when he is neither a landowner nor employed in the mines, is so wretchedly poor, that he is sometimes obliged to beg or to steal. And yet the number of malefactors is infinitely small in comparison to that of persons without means, whom the privileged classes absolutely ignore. The rich peasant, therefore, cannot confide in all chance comers, nor does he feel the slightest faith in the nobility, who vote regularly in the Diet for their own interests, in opposition to those of the other classes; but the soldier, above all the members of the *indelta*, is the friend of the peasant. We are the most independent power in the State, since the law secures us a sufficient and honorable support in spite of every opposing influence. It is well known that we are generally devoted to the king, when he sustains the people and protects them against the abuses of the nobility. This is his only course with us, and the peasant, who makes common cause with him, cannot be deceived. Have patience, Christian; a time will come when the senate will be obliged to settle accounts with the bourgeois and peasant! Our king dares not. Our queen, Ulrica, is bold enough, but

would the sister of Frederick the Great pause on the road if she could once succeed in subduing the pride and ambition of the iarls? I doubt it. She would think only of extending the royal power, without admitting that the people also ought to be allowed more freedom. Our hope, therefore, is in Henry, the prince royal. He is a man of genius and a man of action! Yes, yes! A time will come—. But pardon me! I am forgetting that you want to look at furs, and that you can scarcely feel any interest in the politics of our country; however, you may rest assured that the prince royal—”

“Yes, yes, the prince royal!” repeated the lieutenant, who had followed the major and Christian under the shed.

He paused with a thoughtful expression, being, in fact, busy in learning the memorable words, which his friend had just uttered, by heart, so that he might form a definite opinion about the situation of his country. He would have been rather indifferent upon this subject if he had consulted the apathetic philosophy that was natural to him; but the major had an opinion, and the lieutenant, therefore, must have one too, and he could not, of course, differ from his friend. Consequently he, also, felt unbounded hope and confidence in the genius of the prince royal. Were both he and Larrison mistaken? Henry (the future Gustavus III.) had many remarkable and most seductive qualities; he was learned, eloquent, courageous, and certainly, in the beginning of his career, sincere, and ambitious of doing good; but he, like Charles XII., and so many others, was destined to yield to the dominion of his own passions, which warred against his desire to promote the public weal. After saving Sweden from an overbearing oligarchy, he did his best to ruin it by a blind ostentation and the false calculations of a corrupt policy. Still, he was a great man at a given moment of his life, when, without shedding a drop of blood, he succeeded in freeing his people from the tyranny of a caste, irresistibly tempted by its privileges to destroy the equilibrium of society.

Christian, from all that he had been able to gather as to the situation of the country, and the presumed character

of the future heir of the throne, shared fully the major's hopes and illusions ; but, nevertheless, he was still more occupied for the moment, not in purchasing the lining for a winter garment — he could not afford any such luxury — but in examining the skins of animals piled up around him in the danneman's little store. In regard to several species this was a lesson for him in natural history ; and Larrison, who was a thoroughly accomplished hunter, informed him in what regions of the north these species were indigenous.

“ Since we shall set out immediately to hunt our bear,” he said, in conclusion, “ you ought to know beforehand what sort of animal we are to deal with. According to Danneman Bøtsoi it is a mongrel, but it is yet to be proved that the different varieties of the bear can breed together. There are three of them in Norway : the *bress-diur*, which lives upon leaves and herbs, and which is very fond of milk and honey ; the *ildgiersdiur*, which eats meat ; and the *myrebiørn*, which feeds upon ants. As for the white bear of the polar seas, which is a fourth, and still more powerful family, I need not tell you that it is not found among us.”

“ And yet,” said Christian, “ here are two skins of polar bears which seem to me as precious as any articles in the danneman's collection. Has he been as far as the Polar Sea on his hunting expeditions ?”

“ It is quite possible,” replied the major ; “ at any rate, he has business relations, as I told you, with parties in the extreme north. It is quite a customary thing for him to travel two hundred leagues in his sleigh, in the middle of winter, to trade and exchange commodities with hunters, who, upon their side, have come just as far on their skates, or with their reindeers, to meet him at the appointed place. He claims now that he is going to show us the mongrel of a white and black bear, because the creature's fur seemed to him mixed ; but as he only saw him at night, by the light of the aurora borealis, which is very deceptive, we can't be sure about it. The bear is so shy and distrustful that very little is known about him, even in our country, where he was found in great numbers a hundred

years ago, and where he is still quite common. It is not really known whether the parti-colored bear is a mongrel or a distinct species. Some believe that the white fur is produced by the cold of winter, and that the spotted coat, therefore, is either the beginning or the termination of an annual transformation, while others assert that the white bear retains his color at all seasons; but you, Christian, are probably more familiar than myself with all these matters. You have read so many works that I only know by name—”

“It is for that very reason that I am utterly unable to solve your doubts. Buffon contradicts Wormsius flatly about the bear; and all our learned historians contradict each other in all their statements, which does not prevent them from contradicting themselves. It is not really their fault, for most of the laws of nature are still unsolved enigmas. When we know so little about animals living upon the surface of the globe, only think what secrets must be enclosed in the bowels of the earth itself! That is what made me say, a little while ago, that it is in the power of any man, no matter how insignificant, to make immense discoveries. But let us return to our bear, or rather let us make haste with breakfast, so that we can go and find him. I have only one fault to find with the Swedes, dear friend, and that is that they have too many meals, and spend too much time over them. I could understand it better if your days were twenty hours long; but when I see how small an arc of the circle the sun has to pass even now, before again sinking beneath the horizon, I cannot help wondering at what hour you propose to hunt.”

“Patience, dear Christian,” replied the major, laughing; “a bear-hunt does not last long. It is a single blow, whether it succeeds or fails; either you lodge two balls in your enemy’s head, or, with a stroke of his paw, he disarms and overpowers you. But here is the danneman coming to announce breakfast. Let us go in.”

The repast brought by the officers was capital; but Christian saw plainly that the young girls, and the danneman himself, were sadly mortified at the sight of all

this good food, and that after looking forward with delight to offering them their rustic viands, they scarcely ventured to place them on the table. Accordingly he made it a point to eat of these, and to praise them; and, indeed, his politeness cost him little, for the danneman's smoked salmon and fresh game were excellent, the butter made of reindeer's milk was delicious, the turnips were tender and sweet, and the sweetmeats—some northern berry preserved—aromatic and refreshing. Christian did not like so well the beverage of sour milk, which was handed round in pewter pitchers; he preferred the light wine made from a different sort of berry, which grows in the greatest abundance throughout the country, and which the people cook and preserve in a thousand ways. But most of all, he admired the Christmas cake that was brought on with the dessert, and which had been made expressly for the danneman's guests, so that they might be able to cut it; for custom required that the cake reserved for the family should remain untouched until Twelfth Night. The danneman thrust his knife resolutely into this luxurious edifice, made of wheaten flour, and tumbled down without mercy the little towers and clocks which his daughters had so skilfully constructed. These young persons, tall, large, and with dark complexions, were not at all pretty, but their figures were good, and they were very coquettishly dressed, making a great display of ribbons, jewels, and, above all, of white linen and black braids. It was only after the cake was cut that they partook of anything. They were invited then to take a piece of the cake, and to moisten their lips from their father's goblet, after he had filled it with strong beer. They remained standing, and, before drinking, made a deep courtesy to the guests, and wished them the compliments of the season.

Christian usually became very impatient at table when he had satisfied his hunger, but he now sank into a profound revery. His companions were quite noisy, although they had abstained from wine and brandy, in the fear of being overcome by intoxication when the time came for starting on the hunt. The danneman, who was at first reserved and rather haughty, became more demon-

strative, and seemed to have conceived a peculiar sympathy for the stranger ; but this man, who understood all the Northland dialects, and even Finnish and the Russian of Archangel, could speak Swedish, his native language, only with extreme difficulty. Christian, with his curiosity and habitual facility, was already trying to understand Dalecarlian ; but even with the help of the narrator's pantomime, he could only follow vaguely the interesting accounts of hunts and travels called for, and eagerly listened to, by the other guests.

Fatigued by the efforts he was obliged to make in listening, and by the excessive heat of the room, Christian left the table and moved away from the stove. He went to the window and gazed at the sublime scenery surrounding the chalet, which stood on the edge of a deep granitic gorge, whose black precipitous sides, glittering with frozen waterfalls, plunged steeply down to the bed of a torrent. The uncultivated meadows above the abyss had such a rapid slope in many places, that their shroud of snow had been blown off by sudden gusts of wind, which had thus left exposed to the sun the green turf beneath, lightly powdered with frost, and brilliant as a carpet of pale emeralds. This remnant of tender verdure, victorious over the frost, was the more striking because of its contrast with the gloomy green, almost like black, of the gigantic pines, which stood crowded together, erect as monuments of the abyss, and hung with fringes of ice-diamonds. Those growing in the crevices where the snow had accumulated, were buried in it half way up their trunks, and these trunks were sometimes a hundred and sixty feet high. Their branches, too heavily laden with ice, hung down ; and, stiff as the flying buttresses of Gothic cathedrals, were welded into the snow beneath. Upon the horizon arose the sharp peaks of Sevenberg, their rosy crests, the abode of eternal snows, resting upon a sky of amethyst. It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, and the sun was already searching with his rays the blue depths, which, when the party reached their destination, had still been enveloped in the cold and gloomy

shadow of the night. Every instant Christian saw them gleaming with changing hues, like those of an opal.

Every artist who has been a traveller, has always remarked the beauty of snow-landscapes in those regions which are, as it were, their favorite haunts. In the south, the snow is never seen in all its glory; it is only in exceptional localities, and on rare days, when it resists the sunshine, that we can form any idea of the splendor of its hues in other regions, and of the peculiar transparency of the shadows that float over its white masses. Christian was seized with enthusiasm. While comparing the relative comfort of the cottage (a comfort altogether excessive as regards heat) with the solemn severity of the spectacle without, he began to dream about the life of the danneman, and to form a picture of it in his imagination, until it actually seemed to him his own life; until he began to imagine that he was in his own house, his own country, his own family.

There is no one of us who, at one time or another, when vividly impressed by some combination of outward scenery or circumstance, has not fallen into one of those strange reveries, in which our life seems double; when we behold the scene before us not only for what it is, but also — like an object reflected in a mirror — as the reflection of some picture already imprinted upon the mind. We imagine that we have already trod the road we are passing; that we have already known, in a previous phase of our existence, the persons we are meeting; that we have fallen back into some scene of the past in which we have already lived. This sort of hallucination of the memory was so complete in Christian's case, that it seemed to him that he must clearly have understood, at some former period, this Dalecarlian language, which he had just found so unintelligible. While listening mechanically to the sweet and grave speech of the danneman, he began unconsciously to finish his sentences before he had uttered them, and to give them a meaning. Suddenly he started up, as if waking from a trance, and laid his hand heavily upon the major's shoulder.

"I understand!" he cried, extremely agitated; "it is

very strange, but I understand. Did not the danneman say just now that he had a dozen cows, and that three of them had become so wild last summer that he could not bring them back to his house in the autumn? that they were lost, and that he had been obliged to shoot one of the remaining ones, to keep it from running away like the others?"

"He did really say so," replied the major; "but it did not occur last summer. The danneman was saying that all this happened twenty years ago."

"No matter," replied Christian, "you see that I understood almost everything. How do you explain that, Osmund?"

"I do not know. But I am not so much surprised as you; it is the result of your incredible facility in learning all languages, in constructing them, and explaining them in your own mind, according to analogies that exist between them."

"No, that was not the process through which my mind passed; it came to me like a reminiscence."

"That, again, is possible. You probably studied, in your childhood, a quantity of things of which you retain a confused recollection. Come, try it again; listen to what those young girls are saying: do you understand?"

"No," said Christian, "it is over; the phenomenon has ceased; I cannot understand, now, a single word they say."

He returned to the window to listen to his host, and try to catch once more, in the same mysterious way, the meaning of what was said; but his efforts were useless. His confused revery was dissipated, and, in spite of himself, reason and real impressions resumed their habitual empire over his mind.

Soon, however, he entered into another train of thought. It was no longer a fantastic past that appeared to him, but a dream of the future logically deduced from the resolutions he had formed, and with which he had entertained the major only an hour before. He saw himself dressed like the danneman, in a blouse without

sleeves, worn over a vest with long and narrow sleeves, in two pairs of stockings, the inner ones of wool and those outside of yellow leather, and with his hair cut square on his forehead. He saw himself seated near his comfortable stove, relating to some rare visitor stories of his expeditions on fields of floating ice, or in the currents of the terrible Maelstrom, and in the obscure recesses of Syltfield.

In this peaceful and primitive scene, which he was imagining as the frugal recompense of his travels and labors, he naturally tried to form an idea of the companion who would be associated with him in the rustic occupations of his maturity. Christian looked attentively at the daughters of the danneman, but these masculine and severe creatures were not sufficiently beautiful to make the idea of being the husband of one of them very delightful. Unless he could sympathize intellectually with the companion of his life, he would have preferred to remain a bachelor. In spite of himself, the phantom of Margaret fluttered into his dream in the form of a blond little *fée*, disguised like a young mountaineer, and prettier in her white chemise and green bodice than in her fine hooped skirt, and her satin slippers. But this fantastic toilet was only a transient masquerade: Margaret was a figure detached from another frame; she could only cross the threshold of the chalet with a smile, and disappear in the blue and silver sleigh, where Christian would never be allowed to seat himself by her side.

“Go, Margaret!” he said. “What are you doing here? An abyss separates us, and for me you are only a vision hovering in the moonlight. My wife will be a dull reality—or rather, I shall have no wife; I will be a miner, a laborer, or a wandering merchant, like my host; and will work for twenty years, so as to be able at last to build my nest upon the point of one of these rocks. Very well, when I am fifty years old I will settle on some magnificent site, and, living there like a hermit, will bring up some abandoned child, who will love me as I loved Goffredi! Why not? And if, in the mean-

while, I have discovered something useful to my fellow men, shall I not be happy?"

Thus did Christian ponder upon the problem of his destiny; but however humble his dream of happiness, it faded away before the idea of solitude.

"What is the meaning," he said to himself, "of this longing for a serious love, by which I have been possessed for the last twenty-four hours? Hitherto, I have troubled myself but little about the morrow. Come, can I not apply to these cravings, to these cries of my heart, the good and sound philosophy which I opposed, in talking to Osburne, to material luxuries and comforts? If, in my project of reform, I can forget my physical wants, subject myself to the rudest physical hardships, can I not also impose silence upon my imagination, and forbid it this flattering dream of happiness? Why, how now, Christian! Since you have settled and decided that you have no peculiar claims to happiness, can you not accept your fate? can you not say to yourself: 'What I have to do is not to breathe the perfume of roses; it is to walk over thorns without looking behind me'?"

Christian's heart was torn as he tried to form this resolution, and his face was bathed with tears; he hid it in his hands, and bowed his head, as if asleep.

"What, Christian!" cried the major, rising from the table; "is this the moment for falling asleep, and for you, too, the most eager of us all for the hunt? Come and drink the stirrup cup, and let us start."

Christian started up, crying *bravo*. His eyes were wet, but his smile was so gay that no one dreamed he had been weeping.

"We have now to decide," resumed the major, "which of us shall have the honor of making the first attack upon his furred majesty."

"Don't you draw lots, and leave it for chance to decide?" said Christian. "I thought that was the custom."

"So it is; but you entertained and interested us so much last evening, that we have been asking each

other what we could do for you in return, and this is the conclusion to which the lieutenant and myself have arrived, with the consent of the corporal, whose vote is worth just as much as ours: we will draw lots, and the lucky one will have the pleasure of offering you the long straw."

"Upon my word!" said Christian, "I am really very grateful for your kindness. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart, my excellent friends; but it is quite possible that you are sacrificing a pleasure that I am not worthy to appreciate. I have not claimed to be an ardent and skilful hunter. I am only a curious—"

"Do you feel any timidity?" rejoined the major. "If that is the case—"

"I cannot feel any timidity," replied Christian, "since I don't know anything about the dangers of this hunt, and I do not consider myself such a coward as to be unwilling to go where danger of any kind is to be encountered. I repeat that I have no sort of vanity in the matter; I have never performed any exploit which gives me a right to monopolize a triumph. Can you not give me a place which will make all our chances equal?"

"That is impossible. We have equal chances when we draw lots; but the one who wins must take the lead."

"Very well," said Christian, "I will take the lead, I will start the game; but, I assure you, if there is any one here indifferent to killing him with his own hand, it is myself; in fact, I should much prefer having time to examine the action and walk of the animal while he is alive."

"But suppose he should fly, and make his escape before you can examine him? No one can foresee what his caprice will be. The bear is usually timid, and, for the most part, in case of assault, he thinks only of flight, except when he is wounded. Be advised by me, Christian: and if you really care to see anything interesting, undertake the attack: otherwise, you will perhaps only see the dead animal after the combat; for it seems that he is intrenched in a narrow space, behind some thick brambles."

"Well then, I accept your offer," said Christian, "and I promise to show you a bear-hunt this evening, on my stage, into which I will try and introduce something entertaining. Yes, really, I will be as amusing as possible, in proof of my gratitude. And now, major, tell me what I must do, and what is the best method for killing a bear properly, without making it suffer too much; for I am a sentimental hunter, and must acknowledge that I am not in the slightest degree ferocious."

"What!" rejoined the major, "have you never seen a bear killed?"

"Never!"

"Oh! then, that is different; we withdraw our proposition. No one here wants to see you disabled, dear Christian! Isn't that so, comrades? And what would Countess Margaret say, if we should carry back her partner minus a leg?"

The lieutenant and corporal agreed with the major, that it would not do to expose a novice to a serious engagement with this ferocious beast; but Margaret's name, which, to Christian's great regret, had been pronounced as associated with him, had set his heart beating. From that moment he claimed the favor that had been granted him, with as much ardor as he had before shown modesty or indifference in avoiding it.

"If I should happen to be successful in killing this bear in good style," he thought, "this barbarian princess will not blush so deeply, perhaps, at our defunct friendship; and if the bear kills me in a tragic manner, she may, possibly, shed in secret a tear of pity over the fate of the poor actor."

When the major saw that Christian was really annoyed at being obliged to draw lots, he persuaded his companions to give him the first chance, as a favor, as they had intended. But, in the meanwhile, he went up to the dancer, and said to him, in his own language:

"Friend, since in your character of guide you are to go in advance with our dear Christian, keep close to him, I implore you. It is his first trial."

The Dalecarlian was greatly surprised, and could not

understand, at first, what the major meant; he made him repeat the warning, and then, looking at Christian attentively, shook his head.

"He is a handsome young man," he said, "and he has a good heart, I am sure! He ate my *kakebroe* as if he had never done anything else all his life; he has Dalecarlian teeth, and yet, it seems, he is a stranger! He pleases me. I am sorry that he cannot talk Dalecarlian with me, and still more sorry that he is going where those more skilful than either he or myself have remained."

The *kakebroe*, to which the danneman referred, was neither more nor less than the ordinary bread of the country, which was made of rye, oats, and pounded bark. The pulverized birch-bark, which was one of its ingredients, made it very hard, even when fresh; and as no one cooks in this country more than twice a year at the most, it becomes, when dry and stale, a sort of flat stone, which strangers find very difficult to masticate. The saying of the Danish bishop who marched against the Dalecarlians in the time of Gustavus Wasa, is historical: "The devil himself cannot get the better of people who eat wood!"

As the danneman, in spite of his enthusiasm for the heroic mastication of his stranger guest, did not seem able to answer for his safety, Larrson's anxiety was renewed, and he again attempted to dissuade Christian. The danneman interrupted him by begging every one to go out, except the stranger. They guessed his intention, and Larrson explained it to Christian.

"You will have to go through some cabalistic initiation," he said; "I told you that our peasants believe in all sorts of influences and mysterious divinities; I see that the danneman will not guide you to his bear with any confidence, until he has rendered you invulnerable by a formula or talisman of some sort. Will you consent?"

"To be sure I will!" cried Christian; "whatever informs me of the peculiarities of the manners and customs of a people, I welcome with all my heart. Leave me alone with the danneman, dear major, and, if he shows me the devil, I promise to describe him to you exactly."

When the danneman was tête-à-tête with his guest, he took his hand, and said in Swedish :

“Don’t be afraid !”

Then he conducted him to one of the two beds that stood in a transverse niche at the end of the room, and called three times : “Karine, Karine, Karine !” after which he drew aside an old stained leather curtain, and disclosed to view an angular form, and a face of alarming pallor.

It was an aged and feeble woman, who seemed to have great difficulty in waking, and who, with the danneman’s assistance, raised herself in the bed, so that she might look at Christian. At the same time, the danneman repeated his warning :

“Don’t be afraid !”

“It is my sister,” he added, “whom you may have heard spoken of ; a famous seeress, a *vala* of the old times.”

The old woman, whose profound slumber had not been disturbed by the noise of the breakfast and conversation, seemed trying to collect her ideas. Her livid face was calm and gentle. She held out her hand, and the danneman placed that of Christian in it ; but she withdrew hers instantly with a sort of terror, and said in Swedish :

“*Mon Dieu !* what is the matter ? Is it you, Monsieur Baron ? Pardon me for not rising. I have had so much fatigue in my poor life !”

“You are mistaken, my good woman,” replied Christian, “you do not know me ; I am not the baron.”

The danneman addressed his sister in Dalecarlian, and probably to the same effect, for she replied in Swedish :

“I know that you are deceiving me ; that is the *great iarl !* What does he want in our house ? Will he not let her sleep who has watched so long ?”

“Do not pay any attention to her,” said the danneman, addressing Christian ; “her mind is still asleep, and she continues her dream. Soon, she will speak sensibly.”

He added, in Dalecarlian, for his sister’s benefit :

“Come, Karine, look at this young man, and tell him whether he must go with me to hunt the *wicked one ?*”

So it is that the Dalecarlian peasant calls the bear, whose name he is extremely reluctant to pronounce.

Karine hid her eyes with her hand, and spoke to her brother with great vivacity.

"Speak in Swedish, since you know Swedish," said Christian, who wanted to understand the practices of the seeress. "I beg you, good mother, to tell me what I am to do."

The seeress closed her eyes with a sort of obstinacy, and said :

"You are not he I was dreaming about, or else you have forgotten the language of your cradle. Leave me, both of you, you and your shadow ; I will not speak ; I have sworn never to tell what I know."

"Have patience," said the danneman to Christian. "She is always so at first. Beg her mildly, and she will tell your fortune."

Christian renewed his petition, and the seeress, still concealing her eyes with her pale hands, and assuming a poetic style which seemed learned by heart, at last replied :

"The ravenous one howls on the heath, his supports fail him ; he rushes forth !—he rushes towards the east, through a valley full of poisons, of peat, and of mud."

"Does that mean that he will escape us?" said the danneman, who listened religiously to his sister.

"I see them walking through noisome torrents," she resumed, "the perjurers and the murderers ! *Do you understand that ? Do you know what I mean to say ?*"

"No, I don't understand it at all," replied Christian, who recognized a refrain of the ancient Scandinavian songs of the *Voluspa*, and who thought that he also recognized the voice heard among the boulders of Stollborg.

"Do not interrupt her," said the danneman. "Go on, Karine ; we are listening."

"I saw the fire burning in the hall of the rich, but before the door stood death."

"Do you mean that for this young man?" inquired the danneman.

Without seeming to hear him, she continued :

"One day, in a field, I gave my garments to two

wooden men; when they were clothed they resembled heroes: the naked man is timid."

"There, you see!" cried Bøtsoi, looking at Christian with an air of simple triumph; "now, I hope, she is speaking clearly."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course I think so. She recommends you to be well clothed and well armed."

"That is certainly good advice, but is that all?"

"Listen, listen! she is going to speak again," said the danneman.

The seeress resumed:

"The fool thinks he will live forever if he avoids the combat; but even age will not give him peace: the destroyer comes with his spear. *Do you understand? Do you know what I mean to say?*"

"Yes, yes, Karine!" cried the danneman, now quite satisfied. "You have spoken well, and now you can go to sleep again; the children will watch over you, and you shall not be troubled again."

"Leave me then," said Karine; "now, *the vala falls into the night.*"

She hid her face in the bedding, and her thin body seemed to sink and disappear in her mattress of eider-down, a rich present which had been made her by the danneman, who regarded her with the utmost veneration.

"I hope you are contented," he said to Christian, as he took a long cord from a corner of the room; "the prediction is good."

"Yes, very good," replied Christian. "This time, I understood. Prudent people gain nothing by hiding themselves; the best way is to march straight on the enemy. Well then, forward, my dear host! But what are you doing with that cord?"

"Give me your arm," replied the danneman.

He began to roll the cord carefully around Christian's left arm.

"That will be enough to amuse the *wicked one*," he said; "while he has this arm in his claws, with your other hand you will rip open his belly with this spear

But I will explain what you must do as we go along. You are ready; let us start."

"Well," cried the officers, who were awaiting Christian in the vestibule; "shall we have good luck?"

"For my part," said Christian, "it seems that I am invulnerable; but I am afraid the bear won't be so well off. The sceress said that he would fly to the east."

"No, no," replied the danneman, whose serious and confident manner forbade any joking; "it was said that the ravenous one would rush towards the east, but not that he would not be killed. Forward!"

Before following Christian to the hunt, we will return, for some moments, to the chateau de Waldemora, whence the baron had started with all his able-bodied male guests, and two or three hundred trackers, immediately after sunrise.

The place towards which this seignorial battue proceeded, was much lower down on the mountain than the danneman's cottage. It was quite accessible to the ladies, who all went, some with the resolution of seeing the bear-hunt as near as possible, and others, less courageous, promising themselves that they would not venture further than to the edge of the wood. Olga, who was eager to show the baron that she was interested in his prowess, was among the former. Margaret, who did not care at all for the baron's prowess, and Mademoiselle Martina Akerstrom, the daughter of the minister of the parish, and the fiancée of Lieutenant Osburn — an excellent young girl, rather too high colored for beauty, but agreeable, affectionate, and sincere, whom Margaret preferred to any of her other new acquaintances — were among the latter. We may as well state, in passing, that Minister Mickelson, of whom mention was made in relating the story of Baroness Hikka, had died long ago, after rashly quarrelling, it was asserted, with Baron Olaus. His successor was **a very** respectable man, and although his living was in the gift of the chatelain, as was the right of certain fiefs, he showed great dignity and independence in his relations with the Snow Man. Perhaps the baron had found out that it was more to his advantage to be on

good terms with a good man, than to have to cater to the bad passions of a dangerous friend. He treated him with great respect, and the pastor often appealed to him in behalf of the feeble and poor, without irritating him by his frankness.

On the whole, there was a lack of excitement in the baron's hunt. No one believed that they would find any bears so near the chateau, especially after several days of revelry and feasting. The bear is naturally shy and sulky. He has no liking either for orchestral music or the play of fireworks; and the whisper passed around from one to the other, that if they should happen to find one, it would surely be a tame bear and a capital dancer, who would come of his own accord to give his paw to the chatelain. The weather, however, was magnificent; the roads through the forest were practicable, and no one failed to be upon the spot, even the old people, who drove to a very comfortable rustic pavilion, where breakfast and dinner were to be served, whether the hunters killed bears or hares.

When the chateau was about deserted, Johan, after sending off on various pretences the servants of whom he did not feel sure, proceeded to exercise the duties of the inquisitor, which he had boasted he would carry through successfully. We subjoin an account of his day, as he noted down all that occurred, hour by hour, with the greatest precision:

"*Nine o'clock.*—The *Italian* yelling with hunger and thirst. Had him silenced—that was easily managed.

"No one at Stollborg but Stenson, the lawyer, and his little valet—Ulph, the drunkard, is not worth mentioning. Christian Waldo has disappeared, unless he is ill, and in bed. The lawyer, who shares his room with him, won't admit any one; I begin to have my doubts about him.

"*Ten o'clock.*—The *captain* sends to inquire if it is not time to act. Not yet. The *Italian* has still too much strength. Christian Waldo is decidedly absent. I went into the famous bear-room, and found the lawyer at work. He says that he don't know where the man

with the marionettes has gone. I saw the baggage of the latter. He is not far.

"*Eleven o'clock.*— I have unearthed Christian Waldo's valet in the stables of the new chateau, and have made him talk. He knows his master's real name: *Dulac*. He must be French, then, and not Italian. A more interesting discovery due to this Puffo is, that there are two Waldos here instead of one. Puffo did not work the marionettes last evening, and the Waldo who talked to me (the man with the wine-colored birth-mark) told me a dozen lies. Puffo does not know who his assistant could have been. For his part, he was drunk and asleep. He cannot imagine, he says, who could have replaced him. I had some idea of sending him to the captain, but felt pretty well satisfied that what he said was true. I shall not lose sight of him. He may be useful.

"This second Waldo must be the false Goeffe. So, if we don't let them know that they are suspected, we can seize them both to-night. I thought old Stenson seemed rather anxious, and told him that he would be left undisturbed. In any event, he must be reassured, so that he may not escape us.

"*Noon.*— I have it all: the secret proof which I send you, and the disclosures of the Italian, which are as follows: (He did not make the least resistance; the mere sight of our chamber of roses rendered him demonstrative.)

"Christian Waldo is really he whom you are seeking. He is handsome and well-made; his description corresponds exactly with the appearance of the false Christian Waldo. The Italian does not know anything about the man with the birth-mark.

"The famous proof, which I procure you gratis, was hidden between two stones, behind the hearth, in a very well-chosen place, which I will show you. I went to get it myself, and I send it to you without knowing what its value may be. You can judge about that. I have sent M. Italian some breakfast; his real name is Guido Massarelli.

"Do not be in any haste to leave the chase, and show

no impatience, even if the papers I send should really be of importance. These mountebanks are undoubtedly in league with Guido, but as they have not been able to communicate with him since yesterday, we have them all in our power. Guido offers to turn against them, but I do not trust him. If the whole thing is merely a mystification to get money out of you, we will pay in another manner than they expect, and will pay dear!"

Having closed his bulletin, Johan tied it to the portfolio which Guido had been forced to deliver up, and sent it, carefully sealed, and by the surest of his messengers, to the baron's address at the rendezvous of the hunt.

XIII.

WHILE this despatch is speeding after the baron, we shall take the liberty of proceeding ourselves to Bøtsoi's chalet, where the brave daunenman wanted to carry Christian off with him with no other arms than a cord and an iron-shod stick.

"Wait!" cried the major; "our friend must be equipped and armed. Your boar-spear is not to be despised, Master Joë, but a good Norwegian cutlass will do more execution, and a good gun will not be superfluous."

Yielding to the entreaties of the major and the lieutenant, Christian put on a reindeer skin coat and felt boots, the latter without either soles or seams, and having the advantage of never slipping on the ice, and of being impenetrable to the cold. Then, after arming and supplying him with powder and balls, Christian's friends put a fur cap on his head, and proceeded to draw lots for their places in the hunt.

"I have number 1!" cried the major, in great exultation; "so it is I who am to yield my place to Christian, and to take my stand a hundred steps behind him; the lieutenant will be on my left, and the corporal on my right, at a distance, also, of a hundred steps on each side. Now then, start, and count your steps; when you have counted a hundred, make us a sign, and we will follow."

Everything being thus regulated, the danneman and Christian began the march, and the others followed, observing the distances agreed upon. Christian was astonished to see them adopt this order of battle from the very moment of departure.

"Is the bear so near," he asked of his guide, "that we should not have time enough ten times over to take our proper positions on approaching his den?"

"The *wicked one* is very near," replied the danneman. "No one of them has ever taken up his winter quarters before, so near my house. I was so far from suspecting his presence, that I have passed a dozen times almost over his hole, without supposing that I had such a handsome neighbor."

"Our bear is handsome, then?"

"He is one of the largest I have ever seen. But begin and talk low; he has very good ears, and, in less than a quarter of an hour, he will hear every word we say."

"Were not your daughters alarmed at having such a neighbor?" said Christian, approaching the danneman, and lowering his voice to please him, though his apprehensions seemed to him exaggerated.

At this question, Joë Bøtsoi drew himself up stiffly, straightened his large head between his shoulders, and looked at Christian askance.

"*Herr* Christian, my daughters are honest girls," he said, dryly.

"Pray have I intimated anything to the contrary, *Herr* Bøtsoi?" said Christian, feeling very much surprised.

"Don't you know," replied the danneman, making an effort to pronounce the name which he disliked so much, "don't you know that the *bear* can do no harm to a virgin, and that consequently an honest girl can go and snatch her kid or her lamb from his very claws, without any danger?"

"Pardon, Monsieur Danneman, I did not know it; I am a stranger, and I see that we can learn something new every day. But are you quite sure that the bear

has such a respect for chastity? Would you allow one of your daughters to accompany you at this moment?"

"No! women can't keep their tongues from wagging, and their chattering gives notice to the game. That is why neither girls nor women should ever go to a hunt."

"And if you should happen to see the bear pursuing your daughters would you not be alarmed? Would you not shoot it?"

"I would shoot it for the sake of getting its skin, but I should not be uneasy about my daughters. I tell you I am sure of their conduct."

"But your sister, the sibyl, she, without doubt, has been married?"

"Married?" said the danneman, throwing back his head disdainfully.

He resumed, with a sigh:

"Whether married or not, Karine is not afraid of wicked tongues."

"Do wicked tongues come to torment you even here, Master Joë? I should have thought, in this wilderness—"

The danneman shrugged his shoulders, and looked discontented, but did not reply.

"Have I displeased you again without knowing it?" asked Christian, after a few seconds.

"Yes," replied the danneman, "and, as it is not well to go together where we are going with something on your heart, I will speak out. Why did you ask me whether Karine was afraid of the bear? I will not take another step until I know whether you are thinking anything evil either of her or of me."

Christian found it difficult to reply to this direct appeal to his sincerity, made, as it was, with a sort of grand simplicity, recalling the manners of early ages. The feeling of curiosity which had led him to question Bœtsoi about Karine had its origin in mysterious causes in his own heart, which it was impossible for him to explain. He thought to make matters right by correcting Bœtsoi's error as to the facts of the case.

"Master Joë," he said, "I did not ask whether

your sister was afraid of the bear, but whether she had been married, and I do not see anything offensive in my question."

The peasant looked at him again, and with such a keen, searching glance, that he felt quite confused.

"Your question does not offend me," he said, "if you can swear that you did not listen to any wicked gossip about my family before coming to my house."

Christian, remembering what the major had said, hesitated to reply, and Bøtsoi resumed:

"Come, come! why should you lie? You have no reasons for being my enemy, and you can tell me freely all you have heard about the child of the lake."

"The child of the lake?" cried Christian. "Who is the child of the lake?"

"If you do not know, I have nothing to tell you."

"Yes, yes!" Christian rejoined; "I know—I think I know. Speak to me as to a friend, Master Joë. Is the child of the lake Karine's son?"

"No," replied the danneman, his face lighting up with a singular expression of enthusiasm; "it belonged to her, indeed, but it was not conceived and born like other children. Karine was unfortunate, as happens to girls who learn things above their condition, and who read in the books of a religion that we ought no longer to understand; but she was not wicked, as people say. I was deceived about it myself as well as the rest, I who am speaking to you! There was a time—I was still very young in those days—when I wanted to put a bullet through the head of a man of whom Karine talked too much in her dreams; but she swore to our mother and to me that she hated that man. She swore it on the Bible, and we could not doubt her word after that. The child was suckled on the mountain by a tame doe, that followed Karine like a kid. She lived alone with him for more than a year, in a different house from ours, much higher than the one you have seen. When the child was weaned we took him into our house, and loved him. He was growing up, he talked, and he was beautiful; but, one day, he departed as he had come,

and Karine wept so much that her mind flew away after him, and never returned. There is a great mystery in all this. Don't every one know that there are women who bring children into the world merely by uttering some form of speech, just as they conceive them by breathing the air of the lakes when the trolls have set it in motion? Karine lived too much down yonder, and every one knows that there are wicked spirits in the lake of Waldemora. Enough said. It is the secret of God and of the waters. No one must think evil of Karine. She does no work, she renders no service that is seen or is useful in a house; but she is one of those who, by their learning and their songs, bring happiness to families. She sees what others do not see, and what she announces happens in one way or another. That is enough, I tell you, for here we are close to the *wicked one's* den, and now we must think of nothing but him. Listen to what I say, and then not a word more, not a single one, for your life."

"Even if it should cost me my life," said Christian, agitated and struck by the mysterious narrative of the dauneman, "you must tell me more about that child which was brought up in your house. Did he not have something peculiar about his fingers?"

The dauneman's face turned a fiery red, in spite of the cold.

"I have told you," he replied, in an irritated tone, "all that I intend to. If it is to insult me, and to defame the honor of my family, that you have come to eat my bread and kill my game, look out for yourself, or give up going to the hunt, Herr Christian; for, as true as my name is Bøtsoi, I will leave you alone with the *wicked one*."

"Master Bøtsoi," replied Christian, calmly, "I am not so much alarmed by your threat, as grieved at the idea of having wounded you. You can leave me alone with the *wicked one*, if you choose. I will try to be more wicked than he; but do not, I implore you, carry away a bad opinion of me. We will resume this conversation, I hope, and you will acknowledge then, that the thought

of outraging the honor of your family could never have entered my mind."

"Very good," replied the danneman, "let us talk, then, of the *wicked one*. Either he will fly with all speed before we have reached his den, and in that case you must fire upon him, or he will make up his mind to fight, and will rise on his hind legs. You know where the place is for the heart; and, if you do not reach it with this good knife, it can only be because your hand trembles. There is only one thing to be careful about: do not let him disarm your right hand before seizing your left arm, for he can see weapons plainly enough, and he has more sense than you suppose. Go up to him, then, coolly and quietly, without being in any hurry. As long as the *wicked one* is not wounded, he is not insolent, and he don't well know what he wants to do. For my part, I usually talk to him, and promise that I will not do him any harm; to lie to a beast is not to lie. I advise you, then, to talk to him pleasantly. He has sense enough to see that he is being flattered, but not enough to see that he is being deceived. And now, wait until I see whether those gentlemen have posted themselves as they ought around the den, for, if the beast escapes us, he must not escape them. I will return in five minutes."

Christian remained alone in a strange scene. Since leaving the chalet, he had come with his guide through the depths of a magnificent forest, covering with its great green waves the flanks of the mountain. The profusion of fine trees in these regions, and the difficulty of transporting them elsewhere for manufacturing purposes, have occasioned the contemptuous, and one might almost say impious, prodigality with which the inhabitants of the country treat these noble children of the wilderness. To make the smallest tool, the most insignificant plaything (the Dalecarlian herdsman, like the Swiss, is very skilful in cutting and carving resinous wood), they sacrifice without regret a giant of verdure, and often, to save themselves the trouble of felling it, set fire to the roots; so much the worse for them, if the flames spread and devour whole forests! In many

places battalions of black monsters can be seen rising over the snow, or, in summer, over plains of cinders. These are the charred trunks that no longer afford a refuge to any animal, and which are the abode of silence and of the immobility of death.* Hunters in Russia are shocked to find, in the splendid forests of that country, the same recklessness and the same protrusions.

The forest in which Christian now was, had neither been burned nor felled, and it was not so painful, therefore, to mark its decay. What you beheld was a grand desolation, a sublime destruction, due exclusively to natural causes: the old age of the trees, the sinking of the ground, the passage of storms. It was like some primeval forest caught between the wandering ice-fields of polar seas. Great pines, shattered and withered, rested upon their neighbors, still green and erect, but whose tops or principal branches they had broken by their fall. Enormous rocks had rolled over declivities, dragging with them innumerable plants, that had either continued to live, broken and twisted as they were, or had been replaced by a new growth springing up over the ruin beneath. Several years must have elapsed since this catastrophe, the result of some deluge, for young birch-trees were growing upon heights which were nothing more than masses of debris and land-slips. With the slightest breath of wind, these trees, which were already beautiful, balanced to and fro the icicles suspended from their light and pendent branches, with a quick, clicking sound, like that of water flowing over pebbles.

This savage region was sublime. A thousand feet beneath him, Christian beheld the torrent of the abyss (the *écou*, or *stream*, as all streams of water are called), and was astonished to find that it had precisely the same colors and the same undulations as if it had not been frozen. At this distance it would have been impossible for a deaf man to know that it was not dashing forward, roaring and tumultuous: the eye was completely deceived

* It is only very lately that the government in Sweden has taken measures — too late, perhaps — to check these devastations.

by its dark metallic tint, covered with enormous eddies, that looked like foam. But for Christian, whose ear would have caught the slightest sound ascending from the ravine, nothing could have seemed stranger than the contrast between the apparent agitation of this impetuous torrent and its absolute silence. Nothing in the world resembles death so much as a world thus perverted by winter. Hence, the slightest sign of life in this motionless picture, a footprint upon the snow, the short and steaming flight of a little bird, is greeted with surprise, and this surprise becomes almost terror when an elk or doe flies before you, with rapid, resounding steps, suddenly awakening the sleeping echoes of the solitude.

However, Christian was thinking just now, not of admiring nature, but of preparing for his fight with the evil one. His soul was oppressed by a most sad and terrible thought. The dæmon's strange narrative, which he had found almost incomprehensible at first, thanks to his incorrect language and superstitious ideas, was beginning to acquire a painful significance. This rustic story, seduced by the trail of the lake, this mysterious child brought up in the dæmon's chalet, and which had disappeared when three or four years old, those inexplicable intonations that had come to him during the morning meal, and which, perhaps, were merely reminiscences suddenly awakened —

"Yes," he said, "now again, the recollection, or the delusion, returns to me. The three last ones — twenty years ago — the gun-shot that stopped the fourth. It seems to me that I can hear now that fatal shot; it seems to me that I can see the poor beast fall, and that I feel again the sensation of grief and regret which I then experienced, and which was perhaps my first emotion, the awakening within me of the life of sentiment. Great God! I feel as if a whole forgotten world were reanimated, and rising before me. Was it not yonder, at the foot of that rock, at the edge of that red-colored precipice, that the scene passed? It must have been there. Has my soul visited this place in some anterior existence,

or have I myself been here? And, in the latter case, who can my father be? Who is that man, whom the danneman came near killing before his suspicions had been lulled to sleep by superstition? Why did the sibyl — my mother, perhaps — why did she shudder when she touched my fingers? She was in a sort of trance, she had not looked into my face; but she said I was the baron! And just now, when I asked the danneman if the child had not some peculiar mark about his hands, did not his anger and grief prove that he had observed and understood this hereditary sign, more apparent, probably, in the child than it now is in the man?

“ Besides, even if he had noticed it in me to-day, he would have been far enough from drawing any comparison. The idea of trying to recognize me did not even occur to him. In his eyes, I was merely a curious and jeering stranger, questioning him about the secret of his family, and that secret is his shame. He prefers to turn it into a legend, a fairy story. He is offended if you doubt the marvels he describes; he gets angry if you suggest that the child's fingers were like those of Baron Olaus. It is only the truth, they say, that offends, and that truth I have divined. Poor Karine, how terrified she was when she took me for her seducer!

“ Her seducer! who knows? This man, hated and despised by all, may have done her violence. She would naturally have concealed her misfortune, she would have made the most of the belief of her family in evil spirits, to prevent her young brother, the danneman, from exposing himself to danger, by seeking to revenge her upon a too powerful enemy. Poor woman! Yes, certainly, she hates him, she fears him still! She has become a seeress since her disaster — that is, mad! She must have received a sort of education, since she knows by heart the ancient poems of her country, and in her exaltation she draws from her confused recollection of these tragic songs, gloomy threats and words of hatred. At any rate, whether I am deceiving myself, or am drawing a logical deduction from facts, I believe it is the hand of God that has led me back to the hut from which I was carried off — why,

and by whom? Was it the danneman, the intrepid traveller, who bore me far away, to remove from his sister's eyes the living image of her remorse, or from his family the sign of their shame? Or should I rather believe in the jealousy of the wife of Olaus, according to the major's theory?"

All these thoughts rushed through Christian's mind, overwhelming him with grief and agony. The idea of being the son of Baron Olaus only redoubled his aversion for him. Under such circumstances he could only regard him as the enemy of his mother's honor and repose.

"Or again," he continued, "who knows if it was not he himself who had me kidnapped, to avoid fulfilling some promise made to his victim, some engagement contracted towards her? Ah! if it were so, I should remain in this country. Without seeking to make myself known, I would go into service with the danneman; by my industry, my devotion, I would certainly gain his respect, and perhaps the love of this family to which I belong, and then I could try and bring back this poor seeress, if not to her right mind, at least to a state of tranquillity, as I succeeded formerly in calming the frenzy of my dear Sophia Goffredi. What a strange destiny is mine! To be thus condemned to have two mothers driven mad by despair! No matter; undeserved as this punishment is, it gives me a duty to perform, and, in fulfilling it, I may be led to some mysterious recompense. I accept the obligation imposed upon me. Karine Bøtsoi may not remember that she has lost her child, but she shall receive, from this time, the care and protection of a son."

At this moment Christian thought he heard some one call. He looked around, and on every side, but saw no one. The danneman had told him to wait; he was to return for him: Christian hesitated, but, after a second, a cry of distress made him start up, seize his weapons, and rush forward in the direction of the voice.

Scaling with wonderful agility the overthrown trees and fragments of debris hardened by the ice and interlocked by enormous roots, Christian, without knowing it, came out at twenty steps from the bear's den. The ter-

rible animal was on the ground between him and this cave, licking up the blood which stained the snow around her bleeding flanks. The danneman was at the opening of the den, pale, his hair blown by the wind and as it were standing on end, and without any weapon at all in his hands. His boar-spear, broken in the side of the bear, was lying near the animal, and, instead of thinking of taking his gun from his shoulder-belt to finish his work, Bøtsoi seemed fascinated by some mysterious terror, or enchained by some inexplicable prudence.

As soon as he saw Christian he made signs to him, which the latter did not comprehend; he guessed, however, that he was not to speak, and took aim at the bear. Luckily, before pulling the trigger, he looked again at Joë Bøtsoi, who ordered him, with a despairing gesture, to stop. Christian, imitating his pantomime, asked whether he was to cut the creature's throat, in silence; and, on receiving a sign in the affirmative, he marched straight up to the bear, who, upon her side, arose erect and growling, to receive him.

"Quick! quick! or we are lost!" cried the danneman, who had taken the gun, and seemed to be watching some invisible object at the bottom of the den.

Christian did not wait to be told twice. Presenting his left arm, wrapped in a cord, to the rather feeble embrace of the wounded bear, he ripped her open in proper style, but without thinking that she might fall forward, and that he ought to jump quickly aside, to give her room. Luckily, the bear fell to one side, dragging Christian with her to the ground; but her formidable claws, contracted in the death agony, could do nothing now but clutch at the skirt of his coat. Buried in the snow, and nailed down, as it were, by the weight and claws of the *wicked one*, laid upon and thrust into the edge of his garment, Christian had some difficulty in getting free, and he left behind him a considerable portion of the major's reindeer-skin coat, but he scarcely thought of that now. The danneman was struggling with other enemies. He had just fired into the dark cave, and another bear, black, and of quite a good size, although young, had come forward to meet him, with a

threatening air ; while two cubs, about the size of two strong whelps, threw themselves between his legs, with no other intention. it is true, than that of flying, but in such a way as to make it difficult for him to maintain his equilibrium. The danneman, resolved to perish rather than make room for his triple prey to pass, supported himself against the trees, whose trunks formed a sort of naturally arched entrance to the cave, and awaited the attack of the young bear, who had been wounded by his shot ; but, shaken in spite of himself by the young ones, he had just fallen, and the wounded and furious animal was throwing himself upon him. when Christian, sure of his eye and his coolness, put a ball into the animal's head, at a foot above that of the man.

"Very well done !" said the danneman, springing up with agility.

In the meanwhile the cubs had run over his body, and, for the moment, his only thought was to prevent them from escaping.

"Stay ! stay !" said Christian, following the two fugitives with his eye ; "see what they are about !"

In fact the two cubs had rushed up to their dead mother, and had glided, cowering, under her bleeding sides.

"It is only fair," said the danneman, rubbing his arm, which the black bear had bruised through the cord, "it is not our place to kill them. We have each of us secured a prize. Call your comrades ; for my part, I am too much blown, and then I have had a fine fright, I confess. That was a narrow escape ; and without you —. But call them, I say. I will talk about that another time."

Christian shouted with all the strength of his lungs ; and the danneman, still trembling a little, but as attentive as ever, reloaded his gun quickly, so as to have it in readiness in case the cubs should abandon their mother's body, and attempt to fly before the arrival of the other hunters.

The firing had already notified the latter of the combat, and they soon appeared, coming from three directions. Larrison, who was first, shouted victory when he saw the enormous bear lying at Christian's feet.

"Look out ! stop !" cried Christian. "Our bear was

a mother ; she had two fine young ones. I intercede for these poor orphans. Take them living."

"Certainly," replied Larrison. "To the rescue, comrades ! here are some pupils for us to bring up."

They surrounded the corpse of the she-bear, and raised it cautiously ; for even when this animal seems to be dead it is necessary to be on your guard, lest it should be feigning. They had some difficulty in capturing the cubs, who already showed their claws and teeth, but they were secured, at last, and carefully bound and muzzled. This accomplished, they had leisure to admire the ample booty which the den had concealed, and regrets were half expressed, which the danneman hastened to anticipate.

"You must pardon me for what I have done," he said to the two young officers. "I had strong suspicions that that great spotted creature was a mother ; did I tell you she was spotted ? Oh, I saw her plainly, but I could not get a good look at the young ones, and, as for the *friend*, I had not seen him at all. I have often been told that the mother brings into her winter's refuge a young *wicked one*, who is neither the father of her little ones, nor even a relative of the family, to defend and bring up her children, in case she should be killed. Never having seen this, I hadn't much faith in it ; now, having seen it, I believe it. If I had known as much before, I should have brought two of you, so that each might have killed a fine animal ; but who could have expected such a thing ? Not thinking to shoot, I only took my gun by way of precaution, in case the Herr I was going with should miss fire, and find himself in danger. As for the iron-shod boar-spear, I had so little idea of using it, that I did not even look to see whether the one I took was in good condition. Well then," continued the danneman, addressing Christian, "this is what happened. I told you that I would return for you as soon as I had posted the others, and as soon as this was done I intended to go straight back where I had left you. But some beast must have disturbed the marks I made last night ; for, without getting lost exactly, I passed directly before the den, and did not recognize where I was, until it was too late to

draw back. The *wicked one* heard me, and she came against me, because she had young ones. I tried to frighten her by waving my arm, so as to make her return to her house, but she would not be frightened, she rose on her hind legs. I ripped her open; I had to do it, and at the same time I called twice. At the sound of my voice the *friend* came to the door of the house, and, to keep him from escaping, I ran and stood before it, without remembering that my boar-spear was lying broken by the mother. I thought she was dead, but after I was standing there she rose up, fell down, and rose up again, twice. Then, Herr Christian, the time seemed very long to me before you arrived; for, on the one side I had the mother, who, at any moment, might recover strength enough to throw herself upon me, and, on the other, the *friend*, who was only waiting for this reinforcement to begin a quarrel with me himself, without counting the two young ones, who I knew very well would be between my legs as soon as the fight should be begun. Against all that I had only one gun-shot, and that was not enough! I did not even dare take aim; for, at the sight of a weapon aimed, the *wicked ones* come to the point more quickly. I was frightened; I can acknowledge it now without shame, since I did not stir a foot, and since the four creatures are in our hands. I waited for you—it seemed to me that I waited a year—and yet I believe you came very quickly, Herr Christian, since all has turned out so well—yes, very well indeed, I declare, and you are a brave man! I am sorry there should have been any angry words between us beforehand. But it is all forgotten; it is not my life only that I owe you, but my heart, just as much. Come and embrace me, and remember that I look upon you as my son.”

Christian embraced the Dalecarlian with deep emotion, and the latter related to the rest of the party how, after quickly despatching the she-bear, body to body, the young man had killed the *friend* very opportunely, by lodging a ball in his head, at only two inches from his, Betsoi's, face. Christian objected modestly to the danneman's exaggeration upon this latter point; but as Betsoi, in

his enthusiasm, would not abate a jot from his statement, and as there were no means of proving the facts, the exploit of the young adventurer assumed colossal proportions in the imagination of Larrison and his friends. Their esteem for him increased accordingly, and this is not at all surprising. Presence of mind is the highest faculty of true courage. We pity those who fail, but we admire those who succeed. Without being betrayed into self-admiration, Christian felt a deep satisfaction at having acquired a claim to the friendship of the danneman, whom he persisted henceforth in regarding as his near relative; but he was very careful not to return to his imprudent questions. He resolved to seek the truth elsewhere, even if it should require a great deal of time and patience to arrive at it.

The weight of the two dead bears, especially that of the female, was enormous; together, they weighed more than four hundred pounds. To drag them over that rough country, where it was with difficulty that you could make your own way, seemed impossible. Even horses could not have accomplished it. As the day had reached its meridian, and as the young officers wanted to join the baron's hunt, they found themselves embarrassed with too much riches. Even the cubs, who refused to walk, were very much in the way.

"Go along with you," said the danneman; "with my children I will soon fell two or three young trees, and build a hurdle; we will put the bears on that, and slide it along to my house. From there, I will send them to you by my sleigh and horse; they shall be at your bostoelle in two hours, so that you can show them to your friends."

"And we will return the dead animals to you tomorrow," said Larrison, "for we would not trust any one else to skin and prepare them. Is not that your wish, Christian?"

"Whatever pleases you is agreeable to me," replied Christian.

"Not at all!" the major rejoined; "the bear we purchased from the danneman is the one you have just killed.

It belongs to you, as the one he shot belongs to him, unless he is willing to sell it."

"He killed them both," said Christian; "I did nothing but finish his work; I have no right to anything."

An animated discussion followed, in which the danneman vied with his guests in delicacy, and showed that he was as scrupulously honest as themselves. At last Christian was obliged to yield, and to accept the she-bear as his prize. The two cubs were purchased from the danneman at the price of one bear, and he was obliged to accept, as exclusively his own, the friend of Madame Bear. Matters being thus arranged, the major and his friends wanted to carry Christian away with them, but he declined.

"I have no wish to go to the baron's hunt," he said; "you yourselves told me that it is not at all interesting in comparison with this one, and, besides, I have no time. Remember that for two days more I am bound by contract to keep on with my present business. I will remain here and help the danneman carry away the *wicked ones*, after which I will avail myself of his sleigh, to return as far as the lake. Do not forget that you have promised M. Goefle and myself to come and see us at Stollborg."

"We will go after supper, when the comedy is over," replied the major; "you can rely upon us."

"And I," said the danneman to Christian, "will guarantee that you shall reach the lake before night."

They had not much time to lose. The officers returned to their country sleighs, and the danneman, assisted by Christian, and also by his son Olof, and his eldest daughter, who now joined them, proceeded, with great skill and quickness, to the building of his hand-sledge. When completed, and loaded with the game, they slid it long without difficulty, some drawing, and the others pushing or holding it back, until they reached the chalet.

As soon as they arrived, Christian looked for the secret. The curtain of the bed was drawn and motionless. Was she still there? He longed to see this mysterious woman again, and to try and talk to her, but he dared not approach her bed. He imagined that the danneman

kept his eye upon him, and that he would have been greatly displeased by any appearance of curiosity.

The youngest of the danneman's daughters brought some brandy, made in the house; that famous corn-brandy, whose manufacture Gustavus III. afterwards made a state monopoly, thus burdening his subjects with a heavy and vexatious tax, that robbed him of all his popularity, and reduced to their former poverty the very people whom he had freed from the tyranny of the nobles. Is the frequent use of brandy really a necessity in these rigorous climates? Christian thought not, and his opinion was strengthened by the fact that this special beverage, which the danneman had made with his own hands, and of which he was very proud, was so strong as literally to take the skin off the throat. The worthy man urged his guest to drink copiously; he could not understand that he should not feel the necessity of getting a little intoxicated, after killing two bears. But Christian could not carry his good-nature so far as that. He would have been very well pleased to have had strength and coolness enough to get Bœtsoi drunk, without losing his own head; but, as it was, he confined himself to drinking some tea, left for him by the major, and served hot, in a wooden cup, very tastefully cut and carved by the youthful Olof.

The young man was a little mortified at having enjoyed the royal pleasure of killing a bear at the expense of his friends; for, in a word, this bear was the property of the danneman, as all game belongs, without question, to the person who finds it on his lands. They had made Christian a present of his prize; that is, they had purchased it for him. He learned with pleasure from the danneman that it was not yet paid for. The major and his friends, not foreseeing that the hunt would be so successful, had not brought money enough. Christian inquired the price of the animal.

"That depends upon circumstances," said the danneman, proudly; "if you leave me the beast, as is sometimes done, it is simply a 'thank you,' which I owe the person who helped me slay him; but, no doubt, Herr

Christian, you will want the skin, the claws, the fat, and the legs."

"I don't want any of them at all," said Christian, laughing. "Good heavens! what should I do with them? I beg you to keep the whole animal, Herr Bøtsoi, and, as I presume you have the right to sell rather dearer to those who have enjoyed the privilege of hunting on your land than you would do to customers purchasing plainly and simply a commodity, I beg you to accept thirty dalers that I have about me—"

Christian finished his sentence mentally:

"And which is all that I possess."

"Thirty dalers!" cried the danneman, "that is a great deal. You are very rich, then?"

"I am rich enough to beg you to accept them."

The danneman took the money, looked at it, and then looked at Christian's hands, but without noticing anything but their whiteness.

"Your gold is good," he said, "and your hand is white. You are not a laborer, and yet you eat kakebroe like a Dalecarlian. Your face belongs to this country, and your speech does not,—the clothes you had on when you came here, were no better than mine. I can see one thing, anyhow, and that is that you are proud; you don't wish your friends, who gave up, for your sake, the pleasure of killing the bear, to spend their money for you."

"Precisely, Herr Bøtsoi, you are right."

"Have no fear. Joë Bøtsoi is an honest man; he will not take anything from your friends, since you leave him the game. As to accepting a reward from you—that depends. Can you swear to me, on your honor, that you are a rich young man, the child of a noble family?"

"What difference does it make?" said Christian.

"No, no," resumed the danneman, "you have saved my life; I don't say much about that, for I would have done as much for you; but you are a skillful marksman, and still more, you are a man who can listen to another. When I made you a sign over yonder, if you had not been willing to do what I wished, we should both of us

have been in a bad way—and I especially, without my boar-spear, and with my arm not well wrapped up. I am very much pleased with you, and I only wish that my son was like you in looks and character, for you are both brave and gentle. So, if you are not rich, don't pretend to me that you are. Why should you? I am not poor myself. In my plain house, such as it is, I want for nothing; and if you are in any need you can apply to Joë Boetsoi. He would have no trouble at all in finding thirty dalers, or even a hundred, to render a service to a friend."

"I am sure of it, Herr Boetsoi," said Christian, "and I may possibly return to you (and if I do it will be with entire confidence), not to ask you for a hundred or for thirty dalers, but to beg you to give me employment. I don't say this is certain, but it may happen, and in that case I should come to you with much more pleasure if I pay you now what I owe you, and what a rich man would pay you. I did not come here in the character of a poor man; you do not owe me anything."

"I don't want any payment," said the danneman; "take back your money, and come to me when you choose. What can you do?"

"Whatever you will teach me, I will do quickly."

The danneman smiled.

"That is to say," he said, "that you don't know how to do anything."

"I can kill bears, at any rate."

"Yes, and very well too. You know how to handle an axe also, and to cut wood; I saw that. But would you be able to travel?"

"That is what I can do best of all."

"Can you sleep on a bench?"

"Yes, or on a stone."

"Can you speak Laplandish, Samoëde, Russian?"

"No, I can speak Italian, Spanish, French, German and English."

"That would do me no good, but it shows me that you can learn to speak in various tongues. Very well, come when you choose, before the end of the month of

Thor (January), and, if you would like to go to Drontheim, or even farther, I shall be very glad not to travel alone; or, if I should take Olof with me, for he is tormenting me to let him begin to travel, you can look after my house. My two daughters are betrothed, I give you fair warning. Avoid giving their lovers any occasion for jealousy; it would be at your own risk. Take care of Aunt Karine; she is gentle, but she must not be contradicted: I have forbidden it once for all."

"I will care for her as if she were my mother," replied Christian, deeply moved; "but tell me, is she ill or infirm? Why?—"

"They will tell you that, if you come to the house. What wages do you want?"

"Nothing."

"How, nothing?"

"Bread and shelter; is not that enough?"

"Herr Christian," said the danneman, frowning, "you are then either lazy or a bad fellow, since you do not think of the future."

Christian saw, that by being too disinterested, he had caused the danneman to distrust him.

"Do you know M. Goeffe?" he said.

"The lawyer? Yes, very well; it was I who sold him his horse. He is a good horse, and the lawyer is an honest man!"

"Very good; he will answer for me. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Yes, it is settled. Take back your money."

"Suppose I should ask you to keep it for me?"

"Why so, is it stolen money?" cried the danneman, becoming suspicious again.

Christian began to laugh, and was obliged to confess that he was a very poor diplomat.

"Believe me," he said to the danneman, "I am straightforward and sincere. Every one gives me the credit of having an honest face, and I am not accustomed, therefore, to having my word doubted. If you don't take my thirty dalers to-day, the major will give them to you to-morrow, and that would annoy me."

"The major will not give me anything, for I will not accept anything," replied the danneman, with energy. "It is you, now, who are doubting me."

Christian was obliged to resign the satisfaction of leaving his small fortune in this house, which was perhaps his mother's refuge. The discussion, though honorable in itself, might have degenerated into a quarrel, for the danneman was feeding his ingenuous pride as a free peasant with rather too plentiful potations of brandy. Besides, the sleigh was ready, and Christian had to start. Nothing would have induced him to fail in either of his two performances, for which he was to receive a hundred dalers; a sum that would enable him to begin the new life he was dreaming about, without being indebted to anybody.

He thought the danneman intended to accompany him; but, instead of getting into the sleigh, he gave the reins to his son, enjoining him at the same time to drive carefully, and to return early.

"I hoped to have the pleasure of your company as far as Waldemora," said Christian to the danneman.

"No!" replied the latter, "I never go to Waldemora, for my part. I should have to be carried there by force. Farewell, until we meet again."

There was so much haughtiness and disdain in the danneman's tone when he spoke of Waldemora, that Christian, as he shook hands with him, felt afraid that he would notice the conformation of his fingers, and that their resemblance to the baron's, whether accidental or inherited, would destroy all their friendship; but the deformity was so slight that the danneman, with his rough hand, did not notice it at all, and several times, as his guest was driving away, he sent after him a cordial farewell.

In spite of his father's recommendations, Olof drove his little horse to the bottom of the valley at a full gallop, while he himself stood up on the front seat of the vehicle with the reins twisted round his arms, at the risk of being hurled to a distance in case of an upset, and of having his wrists dislocated, at the very least.

XIV.

THE danneman's sleigh was not so light as the one in which the major had brought Christian to the chalet, but fortunately it was more solid, for the young Dalecarlian did not condescend to avoid either rock or hole. Instead of allowing the horse—the more intelligent of the two—to go as his instinct should direct, he made the drive, dangerous under any circumstances, blunderingly foolhardy, by whipping and opposing him at every point. Christian, who was lying in the midst of the four bears, two of them dead and two living, said to himself that he would fall softly, unless they should be flung to one side and he to the other. At last, irritated at seeing the danneman's horse maltreated without any advantage to any one, he took the reins and the whip abruptly, saying to the young lad, in a tone indicating his displeasure, that he preferred driving himself.

Olof was good-natured and gentle; he only put on his terrible airs out of vanity, so as to appear like a man. He began singing a Swedish song, both to amuse himself and to show his companion that he pronounced the mother-tongue more purely than the other members of the family. Remarking this, Christian determined to have a talk with him.

"Why," said he, "did you not come with us when we went to the hunt? Have you never yet seen a bear erect?"

"Aunt would never let me," replied the young lad, with a sigh.

"Aunt Karine?"

"There is no other at our house."

"And you have to do everything she says?"

"Everything."

"Has she predicted that you would have bad luck?"

"She says that I am too young."

"She is right, perhaps."

"It must be so, since she says so."

"She is a woman, it seems, who knows more than others?"

"She knows everything, since she talks with—"

"With whom does she talk?"

"I must not speak about that; my father will not allow it?"

"Because he is afraid that people will laugh at his sister; but he has no fear of that with me, for he told me to ask her what luck I should have in the hunt."

"And did she tell you?"

"She did. Where did she learn her science?"

"She learned it where she still learns it: in the waterfalls where girls who have died for love weep, and on the lakes where the men of past times return."

"She is still able to walk, then?"

"She is not old; she is only fifty."

"But I thought she was infirm?"

"She can walk quicker and farther than you."

"Then she is ill just at present, since she remained in bed while we were at breakfast?"

"She is not ill. She is often tired like that, when she has been standing up a long time."

"I thought she did not work?"

"She does not work; she talks, or she walks; she sings, or she prays; and, whether by night or day, she watches until she drops with fatigue. Then she sleeps so long, that you would think she was dead; but sometimes you are very much surprised, in the morning, when you go to her bed, to find that she is neither there, nor in the house, nor on the mountains, nor anywhere, where any one else can go."

"And where do you suppose she is, when she disappears in this way?"

"Some say that she goes to Blakulla; but you must not believe them!"

"What is Blakulla? The rendezvous of witches?"

"Yes, the black mountain where those wicked women take the little children whom they steal while they are asleep, and whom they carry to Satan on the horse

Skjults, who looks like a flying cow. Then Satan takes and marks them by biting them, either on the forehead or the little fingers, and they keep that mark all their lives. But I know very well why they say that of my aunt Karine."

"And why?"

"Because a long time ago, before I was born, it seems that she brought a little child to the house, whose fingers had been bitten by the devil. My father would not look at him at first, but in a little while he began to love him, and he says that my aunt is a good Christian, and that all people say of her is false. The pastor finds nothing to blame in her, and he says, since she needs to run about in her sleep, she must be allowed to do so. Besides, she has declared herself, that she would die, and that great misfortunes would happen, if she should be shut up. That is why she goes where she wishes; and my father says it is better not to know where she goes, because she has secrets that she could not help, perhaps, disclosing, if she should be followed and watched."

"And did no accident ever happen to her while she is walking thus sound asleep?"

"Never; and perhaps she is not really asleep when she walks,—how does any one know? It is certain, anyhow, that we are sometimes three days and three nights without knowing whether she will return, but she always comes back, some time or other; and then, when she has slept and dreamed, she is no longer ill, and she prophesies things that always happen. Stay, this morning—But my father forbade me to repeat it!"

"If you tell me, Olof, it is as if you told these stones."

"Do you swear on the Bible not to repeat it?"

"I swear on whatever you choose."

"Well," replied Olof, who so seldom found any one to talk to in the solitude of his mountain home, that he was quite delighted at securing the attention of the handsome stranger, "this is what she said when she woke up at day-break. 'The great iarl is going forth to the hunt. To the hunt the iarl and his suite are departing.' The iarl, you know, is the Baron de Waldemora!"

"Ah, ah! He has really gone hunting. But your aunt may have heard that."

"Yes, but the rest, you will see: 'The iarl will leave his soul at the house; at the house he will leave his soul' — wait, wait until I think of the rest; — she sang it — I know the air, the air will remind me of the words."

And Olof began to sing the oracle to an air that might have brought the devil, in person, to the spot.

"And when the iarl shall return to the house, when he returns to the house to rejoin his soul, the soul of the iarl will no longer be there."

Just as the young Dalecarlian had finished these mysterious words, a sleigh, advancing at great speed, began rapidly to gain upon them, and the resounding voice of the coachman cried imperiously, "Room! room!" At the same time he whipped savagely his four horses, who had been terrified, while still at a distance, by the odor of the bears brought by Christian. They had left the mountain, and were on a narrow road running along the edge of a gorge, and which led to the lake. Christian, fearing that they would be upset unless he should get out of the way, and seeing no means of accomplishing this unless by pitching headlong into the stream at the bottom of the gorge, whipped the danneman's horse so as to get forward and reach a place where there would be room for the other vehicle to pass; but, just as he had succeeded in drawing a little to the right, the brutal coachman of the advancing sleigh urged forward his fiery horses, the two vehicles grazed, and were upset simultaneously.

Christian found himself on the earth with Olof and his four bears, and so effectually buried in the snow piled up along the edge of the road, that it took him some time to discover whereabouts, and in what company, he had been interred in this fashion. The first voice that struck upon his ear, the first face that rejoiced his sight, were the face and voice of the illustrious Professor Stangstadius. The learned man had not been at all injured; but he was furious, and, making his first attack upon Christian, who was not masked, and with whom, as he arose, he found

himself face to face, he overwhelmed him with insults, and threatened him with divine vengeance and the maledictions of the universe.

"There, there, gently, gently!" replied Christian, helping him to get up upon his unequal legs once more; "you have no bones broken, Monsieur Professor, God be praised! I call the universe and heaven to witness how glad I am! But, if it is you who drive your equipage so crazily, I must say that you are not very considerate of people whose horses are not as good as yours. There now, leave me alone," he added, quietly pushing away the geologist, who was attempting to seize him by the collar, "or else, the first time I meet you on the lake, I will leave you to freeze there, instead of bruising my shoulders by carrying you."

The professor, without seeking to recognize Christian, continued declaiming, to prove to him that it was his fault that the accident had happened, when Christian, who was only thinking of picking up his game and Olof, noticed, in the midst of the four bears, a man of lofty stature, stretched out and motionless, with his face to the earth. At the same time, a young man, dressed in black, and pale with terror, came from the opposite bank, where he had been thrown, and running forward, cried:

"The baron! Where is the baron?"

"What baron?" said Christian, who had just lifted up the swooning man, and was supporting him in his arms.

At this moment the son of the danneman pushed Christian with his shoulder, and whispered:

"The iarl! look at the iarl!"

The baron's young physician hastened to remove his fur cap, which had got pulled down over the invalid's face, so that he was in danger of suffocating; and Christian came very near opening his strong arms and letting him fall back into the snow, on recognizing, with an insurmountable horror, in the dying man whom he was trying to succor, the Baron Olaus de Waldemora.

They stretched him out on the pile of bears; it was the best bed possible under the circumstances, and the terrified physician implored Stangstadius, who had for-

merly taken a degree as a physician, to assist him with his advice and experience, in a case which seemed to him extremely grave. Stangstadius, who was making ready to try all his joints, to satisfy himself that he was not more damaged than usual, consented, at last, to pay some attention to the only person whom the overturn seemed to have seriously endangered.

"*Parbleu !*" he said, looking at the baron, and touching him ; " it is perfectly plain : the pulse inert, the face purple, the lips swollen, a death rattle, and, notwithstanding, no injury — It is as clear as day ; it is a fit of apoplexy. He must be bled — bled quickly, and abundantly."

The young physician looked for his case of surgical instruments, and could not find it. Christian and Olof assisted him in his search, but with no better fortune. The baron's fiery horses had run away with his sleigh, and, by this time, it was almost out of sight. The coachman, thinking that his master would have him beaten to death for his awkwardness, was running after it, half crazy, and startling the desolate silence with his imprecations.

As the danneman's docile horse had stopped short, they talked of putting the invalid in the peasant's sleigh, and removing him to the chateau as quickly as possible. Stangstadius protested that he would be dead before they could arrive. The doctor, out of his senses, proposed running after the runaway horses, so as to look for his case in the baron's sleigh. At last he found it in his pocket, where, thanks to his agitation, he had touched it a dozen times without feeling it ; but his hand trembled so, when the moment came to open the vein, that Stangstadius, who was perfectly indifferent to anything outside himself, and who, besides, was very well pleased at being able to prove his superiority in all respects, was obliged to take the lancet and do his work for him.

Christian, who was standing near by, contemplated, with deep inward emotion, this strange and gloomy picture, lighted by the pale gleams of the setting sun : this man, with his powerful frame and terrible countenance, tossing convulsively on his strange couch, — a confused

pile of corpses of ferocious beasts; his large, white arm, from which a stream of black blood, congealing upon the snow as it fell, was slowly flowing; the young physician, with his mild, pusillanimous face, upon his knees by his terrible patient, and seemingly divided between the fear of seeing him die under his hands, and a childish terror at the growling of the still living bears by his side; the overturned sleigh, the scattered weapons; the startled look of the young danneman, through which — strangely blending with his terror — flashed a gleam of malignant satisfaction; the thin horse smoking after his rapid race, as he indifferently ate the snow; and, above all, the fantastic face of Stangstadius, lighted up by a smile of triumph which had become his habitual expression, and his sharp voice, haranguing about all that had happened, in a self-satisfied and pedantic tone. It was a scene never to be forgotten: a group at the same time laughable and tragic; at a first glance, perhaps, incomprehensible.

"My poor doctor," said Stangstadius, "there is no use in hiding it, if your invalid escapes he will be lucky! But don't imagine it is the upset that has brought on this fit; it has been threatening for the last twenty-four hours. How is it that you did not foresee it?"

"I foresaw it plainly," said the young doctor rather spitefully, "and told you so an hour ago, Monsieur Stangstadius, when he received that letter at the hunting pavilion, that disturbed him so; as he read it, his very features grew distorted. It is not my fault if you have forgotten what I said. I did everything in my power to prevent his lordship from going to the hunt. He would not listen to anything; the most he would consent to, was to allow me to accompany him in his sleigh."

"By heavens! a valuable assistant you are! If I had not offered to return with the two of you, when I saw that he was not in a condition to hunt, he would probably have stifled here. You would not have had presence of mind enough—"

"You are very hard upon young people, Monsieur Professor," replied the physician, more and more offended;

"there is some excuse for losing your presence of mind when you have just been thrown ten feet out of a sleigh, and are no sooner up again than you are called upon to judge, at the first glance, of what is perhaps a hopeless case."

"A fine matter, truly, a fall in the snow!" said M. Stangstadius, shrugging the one shoulder which was obedient to his will. "If you had fallen, as I did, into the bottom of the shaft of a well! A fall of fifty feet, seven inches, and five lines, a swoon lasting six hours, fifty-three —"

"Goodness gracious! Monsieur Professor, it is the swoon of my patient that I am troubled about, and not yours! What is past is past. Will you be so good as to hold his arm, while I look for a ligature?"

"No, not at all; the fact is that there are some people who complain about everything," continued Stangstadius, coming and going, without listening to the doctor.

Then, forgetting that he had just been in a terrible rage against Christian, the quick-tempered, but really good-natured worthy, turned gayly to him.

"Did I so much as turn pale," he said, "when I found myself under those four animals — without counting the two others, you and your comrade? Two awkward clowns, be it said in passing! But what matter a few bruises more or less, after all? I did not even think of myself! I was all ready to give an opinion about the invalid, and to bleed him. My eye rapid and sure, my hand firm! — How now — where the devil have I seen you?" he continued, still addressing Christian, and forgetting all about the sick man. "Did you kill all these beasts? There is a fine prize, to be sure, a bear of the large kind, the brown species with blue eyes! When one thinks that that imbecile of a Buffon — But where did you meet with it? It is rare in this country!"

"You must excuse me from replying, at present," said Christian; "the doctor requires my help."

"Let him alone — let the blood flow;" remarked the geologist, quietly.

"No, no, he has lost enough!" cried the physician;

"the bleeding has had a good effect. Come and see, Monsieur Professor; but we must not abuse the remedy; it is as dangerous now, as the evil it is to counteract."

Christian, not without a shudder of mortal and inexplicable repugnance, held the baron's cold, heavy arm, while the physician closed the vein. The sick man opened his eyes, and soon tried to make out where he was. His first glance was for the strange bed where he was lying, the second for his blood-stained arm, and the third for his trembling physician.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, in a feeble voice, and in a scornful tone, "you have been bleeding me! I forbade it."

"It was necessary, your lordship; you are much better, thank heaven!" replied the doctor.

The baron was too weak to argue. He tried to look around him with his faded eyes, in which appeared an expression of gloomy anxiety; but, when he saw Christian's face, his eyes dilated, and fastened upon him with a stupefied stare. At that moment, Christian was bending forward to help the physician to lift him up; he repulsed him with a convulsive gesture; and the faint semblance of a lifelike hue, that was beginning to return to his face, was succeeded by a livid pallor.

"Open the vein again," cried Stangstadius to the doctor; "I knew you were closing it too soon. Did I not tell you so? Open it, and afterwards leave him quiet for at least five minutes."

"But the cold, Monsieur Professor," said the physician, obeying Stangstadius mechanically; "are you not afraid that the cold will be fatal, under such circumstances?"

"Bah! the cold!" replied Stangstadius; "I laugh at the cold of the atmosphere! The cold of death is much worse! Let him bleed, I tell you, and then let him rest. You must follow the prescription, come what may."

Turning to Christian, he added:

"The tall baron is in a bad scrape. I would not like to be in his skin just now. There now—where the devil have I seen you?"

Just then he picked up something on the snow, which set him running on a new tack.

"What is that piece of red stone doing here?" he cried; "a fragment of porphyry, in a region of gneiss and basalt? You must have brought it from up yonder," he added, pointing to the peaks rising to the west. "It was in your pocket. Ah! you see it is not very easy to deceive me! I know the character and form of all the rocks at ten leagues distance!"

The baron's sleigh finally returned, and a few moments afterwards, as he began to seem a little better again, they were able to close the vein, and place the sick man in his equipage, which proceeded slowly to the chateau, while Christian started, in advance, with the son of the danneman.

"Well," said the young lad, when they had left the gloomy vehicle behind them, "what was I telling you when it happened? What did my aunt Karine say?"

"I did not understand the song very well," said Christian, absorbed in his thoughts; "it was not very cheerful, I remember."

"He left his soul at the house," repeated Olof; "'and when he shall come to rejoin it, he will no longer find it.' Is not that perfectly plain, Herr Christian? The iarl was ill; he wanted to shake off his malady; but his soul did not want to go to the hunt, and with good reason, perhaps, for it is bound now on a villanous journey!"

"You hate the iarl!" said Christian. "You think his soul is going to hell!"

"As to that, God knows! But as to hating him, I don't hate him any more than every one does. You don't love him yourself, do you?"

"I—I do not know," replied Christian, shuddering inwardly at the consciousness of the hate which filled his heart, more intense, perhaps, than was felt by any other person.

"Well, if he gets well," resumed the lad, "you will hear about it! He will soon find out who upset him, and, if you are wise, you will quit the country."

"So, then, every one believes that it will not do to offend him?"

"Good gracious! He poisoned his father, he stabbed his brother with a dagger, and he starved his sister-in-law; and he has killed ever so many other people besides that my aunt Karine knows about, and that every one would know about, if she would speak; but she will not!"

"And don't you feel afraid that the baron's anger will be directed against you, when he shall learn that it is your father's sleigh that upset him?"

"It is not the fault of the sleigh, and mine still less. You would drive! If I had been driving it would not have happened, perhaps; but what is to happen, happens; and when harm befalls wicked men, it is because it is the will of God!"

But Christian, constantly haunted by the dreadful idea that had taken possession of him, shuddered at the thought that destiny had perhaps chosen him, as the parricidal instrument for accomplishing the baron's destruction.

"No, no!" he cried, in answer to his own thoughts, rather than to the son of the danneman; "I did not cause his fit. The physicians said that he had been doomed for twenty-four hours."

"And my aunt Karine said so too!" rejoined Olof; "so you can rest easy, he will not recover."

Thereupon, Olof began humming the sad refrain which reminded Christian more and more of the melancholy air which he had heard the previous evening among the boulders.

"Does not your aunt Karine sometimes go to Stollborg?" he asked of Olof.

"To Stollborg?" said the lad. "I should only believe it if I saw it."

"Why?"

"Because she does not like that place; she will not even allow it to be named where she is."

"Why so?"

"Who can tell? And yet, in former years, when the

Baroness Hilda was alive, she lived there; but I cannot tell you anything more about it, because I have told you now all that I know; we never speak, at our house, either of Stollborg or of Waldemora!"

Christian felt that there would be something indelicate in questioning the young danneman about the relations that may have existed between his aunt and the baron; besides, he had become so gloomy and depressed, that he had not the heart, for the moment, to make any further inquiries.

The sudden change in the atmosphere contributed not a little to his melancholy. The sun, whether beneath the horizon or not, had entirely disappeared in one of those thick fogs which *very* frequently, in the short winter days, suddenly envelop earth and sky, especially towards sunset, or in the morning at sunrise. It was a heavy, melancholy veil, of a dull, leaden gray, which grew thicker every instant, and which soon left nothing visible but the bottom of the gorge, into which it had not yet fully penetrated. In proportion as it approached this goal, it seemed to sweep forward in dense waves, but it did not mingle at all with the black smoke rising from great fires kindled in the depths of the valley, to preserve harvests or keep open small streams of water.

Christian did not even ask Olof the object of these fires; he gave himself up to the dreary amusement of watching their red and spectral forms, glimmering like rayless, fluctuating meteors on the banks of the stream, and in following with his eye the persistent and fantastic struggle of their gloomy flames and clouds of smoke, with the fog, which, through the contrast, seemed even whiter than it was. The frozen torrent was still visible; but, by some strange optical delusion, it sometimes appeared so near the road that Christian imagined he could touch it with the end of his whip, and sometimes seemed buried in immeasurable depths, while in reality it was infinitely less distant, and infinitely less near, than the deceptive undulations of the fog caused it to appear.

Night followed, with the long northern twilight. At this hour there is usually a delicate greenish tint in the atmosphere, but this evening it was colorless and livid. Not a living being was visible on the face of the globe; whatever had life was concealed, motionless, silent. Christian felt oppressed at this universal gloom of nature, and then he accepted it with a sort of apathetic resignation. Olof jumped out to lead the horse, for the road, as it now descended to the shore of the lake, spreading like a vague ocean of vapor beneath them, was almost perpendicular. Christian imagined that he was descending the sharp declivity of the globe itself, and about to plunge off into the void abysses of space. Two or three times the horse slipped until he was thrown back upon his haunches, and Olof came very near letting go the bridle and leaving him to his fate, together with the sleigh and the traveller. The latter was overwhelmed by a mortal indifference. The baron's son! These three words, written, as it were, in black letters upon his brain, seemed to have killed within him hope in the future, and love of life. It was not despair that he felt, but a profound disgust for all that life can offer; and, in this mood, the only thing he noticed was the one immediate fact that he felt overwhelmed with sleep, and that he would have been quite willing to fall asleep forever by rolling, without a sound, to the bottom of the lake. He did really lose himself, and so completely, that he had entirely forgotten where he was, when a voice as faint as the twilight, as veiled as the sky and the lake, sang close to him these words, to which he listened unconsciously, and gradually comprehended:

"Behold, the sun is rising! Beautiful and clear it shines on the meadow enamelled with flowers. I see the fairies all in white, crowned with garlands of willow-boughs and lilacs; the fairies who dance in the valley, on the moss glittering with dew. The child is in the midst of them, the child of the lake, more beautiful than the morning.

"Behold, the sun climbs to the zenith! The birds are silent; the little flies buzz in the beams of dusty gold.

The fairies have entered a grove of azaleas, to seek the cool, refreshing shade on the shore of the stream. The child is asleep on their knees — the child of the lake, more beautiful than the day.

“Behold, the sun is setting! The nightingale sings to the diamond star that mirrors itself in the waters. The fairies are seated at the foot of the sky, on the staircase of rosy crystal; they sing a lullaby to the child, who smiles in his downy nest; the child of the lake, more beautiful than the star of the evening!”

Once again it was the voice heard among the boulders that struck upon Christian’s ear, but it seemed, as it now chanted poetic words set to an agreeable and melodious air, far sweeter than before. The words were, perhaps, a modern song which the sibyl had understood and remembered exactly. However, it was in vain that Christian tried to catch the faintest glimpse of a human form. He could not even see the horse that was conducting him, or rather, to speak more correctly, which was no longer conducting him, for the sleigh was standing still, and Olof was not there. Far from feeling uneasy about his situation, Christian listened until the three verses were completed. The first had seemed to him to be sung a few steps behind him, the second nearer, and the third farther on; gradually the voice died away in advance of him.

The young man came very near jumping out of the sleigh, to try and seize the invisible singer as she passed; but, as he put out his foot, he became aware that there was a void under him instead of solid ground; and, as the tender words of the song had revived within him the instinct of self-preservation, he stretched out his hand, to find out where he was. He felt the reeking rump of the horse, and called Olof several times, without receiving any reply. Then, as the singer’s voice began chanting again, still farther away, he called her also, by the name of *Vala Karina*; but she either did not hear him, or would not answer. He resolved then to get out on the other side of the sleigh, and he found himself on a steep road, which he explored for about twenty

steps, still calling Olof with the greatest anxiety. Could the child have rolled over a precipice during Christian's brief slumber? At last he saw, gleaming through the fog, an imperceptible point of light, which came towards him, and soon he recognized Olof carrying a lighted lantern.

"Is it you, Herr Christian?" said the lad, who had not heard him approach, and who was terrified at meeting him thus suddenly face to face. "It was wrong of you to get out of the sleigh when you could not see well; this is a very dangerous place, and I told you not to budge while I went to light my lantern, at the mill close by. Didn't you hear me?"

"Not at all; but you, did not you hear some one singing?"

"Yes, but I did not listen. You often hear voices on the shore of the lake, and it is not good to understand what they sing, for then they will lead you into places from which you never return."

"Very well, for my part, I listened," said Christian, "and I recognized the voice of your aunt Karine. She must be close by — Let us look for her, since you have a light, or call her; she will, perhaps, answer you."

"No no!" cried the boy; "leave her alone. If she is in her dream, and we wake her up, she will kill herself!"

"But she is in just as much danger of killing herself if we leave her walking on the edge of this ravine, where you can't see your hand before you!"

"Where we cannot see, she can; be quiet, unless you wish to bring some misfortune upon her, and to prevent her from returning to the house, where I am very sure I shall find her as usual."

Christian was obliged to give up the idea of seeking the sceress, especially as the light of the lantern was scarcely sufficient to show them where to plant their feet, the fog was so impenetrable. Christian helped Olof to guide the horse cautiously to the shore of the lake, and there the lad, who did not seem at all alarmed by their adventures, asked him whether he would get into the sleigh again, and go on to the major's bostoelle.

"No, no," said Christian, "I must go to Stollborg. Must I not turn to the right?"

"No," said Olof, "try to walk forward in a straight line, while you count three hundred steps. If you take two steps more and don't come to the rock, you have gone wrong."

"And what must I do then?"

"Look and see from what direction the whiffs of the fog come. The wind is from the south, and it is quite mild. If the fog passes to your left, you must turn to your right. As for the rest, there is no danger on the lake, the ice is firm everywhere."

"But you, my child, will you be able to get along all alone?"

"Able to go to the bostoele? I promise you. The horse knows the road now; don't you see how impatient he is?"

"But you will not return to your father's house this evening?"

"Yes, indeed! The fog will lift, perhaps; and besides, the moon will rise soon, and, as it is full, I can see to drive."

Christian shook hands with the young danneman, gave him a daler, and, following his instructions, reached Stollborg without missing his road, and without meeting a living soul.

XV.

M. GOEFLE'S fourth meal had just been served, and he was seriously occupied in giving Master Nils a lesson in deportment, while the child, standing before him with a napkin on his arm, seemed in quite a teachable mood.

"Bravo, Christian, you have come precisely at the right time!" cried the doctor of laws; "I was on the point of taking my coffee all alone. I made it myself, for both of us; I can guarantee that it is excellent, and you must want something to warm your stomach."

"I will join you in a moment, my dear doctor," replied Christian, taking off his torn vest and preparing to wash his hands, which were covered with blood.

"Good gracious!" resumed M. Goeffle, "are you wounded, or have you by chance cut the throats of all the bears of Sevenberg?"

"There has been a little of that," replied Christian, "but I think it is human blood that is on my hands now, Oh, M. Goeffle, I have such a story to tell you!"

"You are pale!" cried the lawyer; "you have something more serious to tell me about than a hunting exploit. What has happened—a quarrel—a misfortune? Speak quickly—you take away my appetite."

"Nothing has happened to me that ought to have that effect upon you, M. Goeffle. Go on with your supper. I will try to keep you company, and I will speak French, because of—"

"Yes, yes," replied M. Goeffle, in French; "because of the red ears of this little imbecile. Go on, I hear you."

While Christian was giving M. Goeffle all the particulars of his adventures, and confiding to him also his conjectures and his emotions, they heard from afar the sound of the noisy fanfares. The baron had left the forest as he so frequently disappeared from his saloons. The cold, the fatigue of the expedition, and, above all, his impatience to attend to the business treated of in Johan's missive, were more than he could endure, and accordingly, after killing a deer, he had stepped into his sleigh under the pretence of going farther on, while the other hunters were requested to pay no attention to his movements, but to continue their sports in any way they chose. Soon after, Larrison and the lieutenant had joined this hunt, where, agreeably to the universal anticipation, no trace of any bears had been seen, but where some few white deer had been killed, and a great number of very large hares.

When the fog came on, the prudent people hastened to drive back to the chateau; but some of the young folks, escorted by all the peasants of the neighborhood, who had been employed as trackers, delayed too long in descend-

ing the mountain, and were obliged to stop at the foot of the hogar, where Larrson advised that they should wait until the moon arose, or until the vapors hanging over the lake should be lifted by the sudden gust of wind by which the rising of the moon is often preceded. Some of the party had the lanterns of their sleighs lighted, and preferred to return at once, but about a dozen remained. Plenty of brandy was distributed to the peasants, who dispersed to their various homes. The servants and marksmen blew trumpets, and lighted a large fire on the hogar, close to the formless fragments of the statue of snow, and the merry company assembled in the grotto, before which the game was piled up in the form of a pyramid, and gayly chatted there at their leisure, relating their adventures, and discussing the various episodes of the hunt.

But the major's stories so far exceeded what any of his companions had to relate, that soon every one was silent, to listen to him. Among his audience, which included both sexes, were Olga, Martina, and Margaret, who had been allowed by her aunt to remain on the hogar with Mademoiselle Potin and the minister's daughter.

"So, gentlemen," said Olga to the major and the lieutenant, "you have been slyly performing dangerous exploits, the proof of which you promise to show us to-morrow, if we will consent to take a walk to your house."

"Say the *proofs*!" replied the major; "an enormous creature, a spotted bear with blue eyes, quite a large black bear, and two cubs, which we intend to bring up, so as to have the pleasure of letting them loose and hunting them when they are grown."

"But who was so fortunate as to kill or capture them all?" inquired Martina Akerstrom, the blond fiancée of the lieutenant.

"The lieutenant captured a cub," replied the major, turning with an expressive smile to his friend; "the corporal and myself caught another; the peasant who was guiding us wounded the large she-bear, and attacked the black bear; but these two furious beasts would infallibly have torn him into pieces, if another of my friends, who

reached the spot all alone, had not ripped open the first, and broken the head of the other with a ball, at half an inch from the poor devil's face."

If Christian's exploit had been related a third time, it is quite evident that the distance between his ball and the daunenman's head would have been inappreciable. The major certainly did not intend to exaggerate: however, his auditors cried out in amazement; but the lieutenant struck his fist upon the table, and took an energetic oath that the distance, if anything, was less, rather than greater, than what the major had said. The lieutenant did not intend to exaggerate, either; how could his dear Osmund be mistaken?

"Well, at any rate," said Margaret, "the slayer of the monsters you have described must be very courageous, and have great presence of mind, and I should like to offer him my sincere congratulations. Does he remain anonymous out of modesty, or is he not here?"

"He is not here," replied the baron.

"Is it really true?" rejoined Martina Akerstrom, looking artlessly at her betrothed.

"It is only too true," answered the lieutenant, heaving a heartfelt and equally ingenuous sigh.

"But did he make you promise," said Margaret, "not to reveal his name?"

"We would not have consented to make any such promise," replied the major, "we love him too well for that; but, when one has a secret which, by good luck, excites the curiosity of the ladies, he likes to make his importance felt, and so we will not tell you anything more — will we lieutenant? — until you have done your very best to guess the name of our hero."

"Perhaps it was Monsieur Stangstadius," said Mademoiselle Potin, laughing.

"No," replied some one, "the professor was at our hunt, and he left with the Baron de Waldemora."

"Well," said Olga, "it may have been precisely to join these gentlemen that they went. Who knows whether it was not the baron?"

"Such exploits are not suited to his age," said a

young man, who would have been very glad to pay court to Olga, in an affected tone.

"Why not?" she rejoined.

"I do not say," observed Larrison, "that he is too old for such exploits, but it is my opinion that he has never had a taste for them. The baron has never, I believe, hunted in the new style; that is, without being intrenched behind a net of strong and well-stretched cords."

"What!" cried Margaret, "did you hunt without nets?"

"In the same way as the peasants of the mountain," rejoined the major; "it is the best way."

"But it must be very dangerous!"

"It was our friend alone who found it so to-day. We will show you to-morrow his coat of reindeer skin. The way in which the claws of the bear have turned this excellent shield into a kind of lace, will show you that he was in very close quarters with the enemy."

"But it is madness to expose yourself so," cried Margaret. "Nothing in the world would induce me to witness such a spectacle!"

"And what is the name of this Meleager?" inquired Olga; "will you not satisfy our curiosity?"

"Confess," said the major, "that you have not tried very hard to guess it."

"Yes, indeed; but the best hunters at the chateau—all I should have thought capable of such feats—are here, and you say that your hero is not present?"

"You have forgotten some one who was at the chateau only last evening," rejoined the lieutenant.

"I have tried in vain to think," replied Olga; "I give it up, unless, indeed, it should be the black mask, the man of mystery, the learned buffoon, Christian Waldo—"

"Well, and why not?" said the major, glancing stealthily at Margaret, who had blushed deeply.

"Was it he?" she cried, with unaffected eagerness.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the young Russian, but more through thoughtlessness than malice, for she was not

bad-hearted. "One would say, my dear child, that you are very much interested in knowing —"

"You know," observed good Mademoiselle Potin, opportunely, "that Countess Margaret is afraid of Christian Waldo."

"Afraid of him?" said the major, in surprise.

"Why, certainly," replied the governess, "and I confess that I am a little in the same case. A mask always frightens me."

"But you have never even seen Christian's mask."

"Oh, that only makes it the more alarming," she answered, laughing. "We are only really afraid of what we have never seen. All the stories that are told of this witty comedian are so strange! And his death's head, that they talk about! We have heard enough about him to make one dream all night, and tremble at hearing his name!"

"Well," said the major, "do not tremble any more, ladies; we have seen the face of Christian Waldo all day long, and in spite of what the baron said last night, his pretended death's head is the head of a young Antinous. Isn't it true, lieutenant, that he is the handsomest young man you ever saw?"

"As handsome as he is amiable, educated, and brave," replied the lieutenant.

And even Corporal Duff, who was outside smoking his pipe, and listening to the conversation, now raised his voice as if in spite of himself, to praise the cordiality, nobility, and modesty of Christian Waldo.

Margaret asked no questions, and did not even venture to make any mental comments upon what she had heard; but while apparently fully occupied in fastening her pelisse, for they had risen to go, she did not lose a word of the praises bestowed upon her friend of the previous evening.

"How is it?" said Olga, who was also preparing for their departure, "that an educated and distinguished man can consent to follow a calling, I will not say disgraceful, but certainly frivolous, and which, after all, will not be likely to make him rich?"

"He don't make a business of his present occupation," replied the major, eagerly; "he follows it merely as an amusement."

"Oh, excuse me, he is paid for his entertainments."

"Well, and so are we soldiers paid for serving the state. Are not our estates and revenues the salary we receive for our services?"

"There is a difference between a salary and wages," said Margaret, with gentle melancholy; "but it begins to be cold: shall we not go? I don't think it will be dangerous now on the lake."

The major saw, or thought he saw, that Margaret was anxious to have a talk with him; he offered her his arm, therefore, to her sleigh, and begged Mademoiselle Potin to allow him to have a seat with them in returning to the chateau. With a few brief words he gave the lieutenant to understand that he would like to have Olga return in another sleigh with himself and Martina Akerstrom; and the good lieutenant, without troubling himself about the reason of the major's request, which he obeyed as if it had been a military order, offered his services to his fiancée and the young Russian.

Thanks to this arrangement, Osmund was at full liberty to espouse Christian Waldo's cause warmly, and to try and change the bad opinion which Margaret and Mademoiselle Potin, her discreet confidante, seemed to have formed of him. To succeed in this, he had only to repeat his conversation with Waldo, and inform them of his generous and eccentric determination to endure the greatest poverty and suffering, rather than continue his adventurous career, of which he himself disapproved. Margaret listened with apparent tranquillity, as if she had been called upon to express her approbation of some case in which she had no personal interest. However, she was not a skilful actress, and the major, who had sufficient delicacy to adopt the same tone as herself, was not deceived as to the interest with which she really regarded his friend in her secret soul.

In the meanwhile Baron Olaus had been laid upon his bed, where he appeared calm. The physician, as usual,

eluded the questions of his heirs. They all soon knew that their *dear and respectable uncle* had returned from the hunt so feeble that his people had been obliged to carry him in, undress him, and put him to bed, like a child; but, according to the physician, he was suffering merely from one of his customary accidental and temporary attacks. Johan gave orders that the amusements and games should continue. The comedy of marionettes was announced for eight o'clock. And as for Doctor Stangstadius, who might have revealed how ill he really was, he had returned from the hunt only to ascend into the observatory of the chateau, to study at his leisure the phenomenon of the dry fog, which he attributed, and perhaps correctly, to volcanic exhalations proceeding from Lake Wetter.

The only person who was really anxious was Johan. As soon as he was left alone with his master, though the physician, who had retired to change his dress and take some food, had implored him to keep the baron from being disturbed, he resolved to find out what he was to think of his mental condition.

"Come, my master," he said, with his customary familiarity, a privilege granted to him alone, which he was never afraid of abusing, and for very sufficient reasons; "are we really dead this time? Haven't you a single smile for your old Johan? one of those sweet little smiles that mean, 'I bid defiance to disease, and I mean to bury all the fools who would like to see me go to the devil'?"

The baron tried in vain to gratify him; the victorious smile which he attempted to summon to his countenance proved a melancholy grimace, accompanied by a deep sigh.

"Anyhow, you understand me?" resumed Johan; "that is something."

"Yes," replied the baron, in a feeble voice; "but I am very ill this time! That ass of a doctor —"

And he tried to show his arm.

"He bled you?" said Johan. "He says that it saved your life; let us hope so: but you must exert your will;

you know perfectly well that that it is your only remedy. Your will performs miracles ! ”

“ I have none left.”

“ No will? Nonsense ! When you say that, it always means that you are very determined indeed about something ; and I can tell you what you want now — that these two or *three* Italians — ”

“ Yes, yes, all of them,” rejoined the baron, with a gleam of energy.

“ There, now ! ” resumed Johan, “ I knew I could bring you round ! Did you see the proof? — ”

“ It is unanswerable.”

“ Stenson’s writing?”

“ And his signature — all the details ! It is strange — strange ! but it is true.”

“ But where have you put it, in the name of heaven ? ”

“ In the pocket of my hunting-dress.”

“ I cannot find it.”

“ You have not looked carefully. It is there. No matter ! Listen : I am overcome with fatigue — Stenson in the tower ! ”

“ At once ? ”

“ No, during the comedy.”

“ And the others ? ”

“ Afterwards.”

“ In the tower also ? ”

“ Yes ; some excuse.”

“ That is easy. A silver plate slipped into the baggage of these jugglers. They will have stolen it.”

“ Good ! ”

“ But if their suspicions are awakened ? If the true and false Christian do not come ? ”

“ Where are they ? ”

“ Who can find out in this fog ? I have given orders ; but an hour ago no one had returned to Stollborg, which is watched and surrounded on all sides.”

“ In that case, what will you do ? ”

“ The proof — that is the portfolio — destroyed, and the man who gave it up to you dead, his secret is dead

too, since Christian Waldo does not know anything about it."

"Is that quite certain?"

"When we get hold of him we will make him confess."

"But he is not in our hands yet."

"Perhaps, by this time — I will go myself to Stollborg, and find out."

"Go quickly! — But if he should refuse to come to the chateau this evening?"

"Then Captain Chimère will go over there with —"

"Very good! and the lawyer? —"

"I will tell him beforehand that you send for him. However — we must be ready for anything; if he refuses to obey? —"

"That will be the proof —"

"That he has an understanding with your enemies. And then? —"

"So much the worse for him."

"That is serious — such a well-known man!"

"Do not harm him; keep him out of it."

"Yes, if possible. No matter, I will try. I will go at once to Stollborg and slip your gold goblet into the pack-saddle of the ass. That will be the excuse for seizing the jugglers, even if we have to go there to catch them. But there may be some disturbance. Christian is a fighting man, and Stollborg is very near."

"So much the better; they will silence him the sooner."

"The major and the lieutenant have taken a great liking to this mountebank. We must be careful, and choose the right moment. I have ordered all the brass instruments in the chateau to be kept playing, and outside they are sending off rockets and fireworks every moment."

"Well thought of!"

"How do you feel now?"

"Better; I think I can even recall — wait, Johan — that face — I dreamed about it again to-day. When was it? Wait, I say! Was it a dream? Destruction! I cannot, Johan, my head refuses — my brain is confused, as it was yesterday."

“Well then, don’t torment yourself; I will find out all about it myself; it is my affair. Come, be quiet! you will come out victorious, as you always do. I will send Jacob to you.”

Johan went out. The baron, exhausted by the effort he had made, fainted in Jacob’s arms, and the physician, hastily recalled, had a great deal of difficulty in bringing him to his senses. Then the patient recovered a feverish energy.

“Off with you, doctor!” he cried; “I am tired of your face! You are ugly! every one is ugly! He is beautiful — *beautiful*, if they speak the truth; but that will not help him any. When one is dead he soon becomes hideous, does he not? Still, if I should die before him, I should like to leave him my fortune — that would be droll! But if I live, he must die; nothing shall save him. Say, then, doctor, do you think I am crazy?”

The baron, after raving in this way for a few moments, fell into a restless, feverish sleep. It was then six o’clock in the evening, and the company at the chateau were just sitting down to the *aftonward*, the light repast which precedes supper.

We are really grieved at being obliged to try the reader’s patience with so many meals, but we should not be true to facts if we should suppress a single one of them. We are forced to remind him that it is the custom of the country to eat every two hours, and that a century ago no one thought of deviating from it, especially in the country, and in winter. Pretty women lost nothing of their poetry in the eyes of their admirers by having an excellent appetite. It was not the fashion to be pale and hollow-eyed. The fresh and brilliant complexions of the beautiful Swedes did not rob them of their empire over heart and imagination, and though not at all sentimental, the young people of both sexes were really very romantic. The little Margaret, accordingly, and the tall Olga, the blonde Martina, and several other nymphs of these frozen lakes, after having taken coffee in the grotto of the hogar, ate their cream and cheese in the great gilded saloon of the chateau, each dreaming about love

in her own way, and all of them happily unconscious that fasting could be considered a necessary condition of sentiment.

There were no longer so many guests at the new cha-teau as there had been during the first few days of the Christmas holidays. Several mothers had carried away their daughters, when they found that Baron Olaus paid them no attention. The diplomats of both sexes, who had an interest in keeping up their relations with him, and his presumptive heirs — whom the baron was in the habit of calling, when he joked about them in French, his *presumptuous* heirs — remained, in spite of the gloom that he shed around him. Countess Elveda was very much irritated at not being able to come to any understanding with her mysterious host; but she consoled herself by flirting with the Russian ambassador. The mornings and afternoons were occupied by the elderly ladies in making and receiving visits in their respective apartments, with a great deal of ceremony and solemnity. On such occasions, they always conversed about the same subjects: the beautiful winter weather, the magnificent hospitality of their host, his remarkable wit — perhaps a little severe — his indisposition, and the wonderful courage with which he bore it, so as not to interfere with the enjoyment of his guests; and, as they conversed thus, they stifled Homeric yawns. And then they talked politics, and argued with great bitterness, which did not prevent them from discoursing about religious topics in an edifying manner. For the most part they entertained the persons who had just come in, by saying all the evil possible of those who had just gone out.

The young people were the only ones who contrived to throw off the moral coldness and gloom which seemed to permeate the very atmosphere. There were about a score of them, of both sexes, who, with or without the consent of their families, had formed attachments among themselves, of a more or less tender character, and who, meeting freely, as they did every hour of the day, acted as each other's chaperons and confidantes. With this happy group were associated some few persons who,

though older, were nevertheless benevolent and cheerful; governesses, of whom Mademoiselle Potin was one, the pastor's family, who were always very highly considered, and courted in all country festivities, several old country gentlemen, plain and simple-hearted, the baron's young physician, when he could escape from the claws of his tyrannical and cunning patient; and, best of all, the illustrious Stangstadius, whenever they could get hold of him, and contrive to keep him with them by paying him — for their own amusement — the most extravagant compliments, the sincerity of which he never doubted, even when they referred to the charms of his person.

The collation of the *aftonward* was as gay to-day as ever, even although the geologist did not make his appearance. The young folks — as the matrons called them — did not even notice the anxious and agitated faces of the servants, who were not quite so blind to the real state of their master's health, as they would have liked to persuade those among them whose business it was to act as spies upon the others.

After the collation, they declared that they had heard enough about the feats of the hunters, and Martina proposed that they should play hide-and-seek, a game that they had enjoyed very much the evening before, partly, perhaps, because they had to go to a different part of the chateau to play it. Instinctively, they avoided a certain isolated pavilion occupied by the master of the house, and perhaps, without openly admitting it, they were not sorry to have an excuse — that of not disturbing the host — for avoiding as well the stately apartments occupied by their parents and relatives. In the upper story of the outer circle of buildings, which was connected by numerous passages with the lower rooms — the latter were used for various domestic purposes, as wine-cellars, bleaching-rooms, etc. — there were a number of long, gloomy, and almost deserted galleries, where they had plenty of room to look for each other, and plenty of dark corners to hide in. They drew lots for the different parties, and Margaret found herself with Martina and her fiancée, the lieutenant.

XVI.

WHILE the young people at the new chateau were enjoying their innocent games, M. Goefle and Christian were making all sorts of comments upon the discoveries relative to his birth which the latter thought he had made. M. Goefle did not agree with his young friend. His ideas, he said, were altogether fanciful, and more ingenious than logical. For his own part, he seemed more than ever tormented by some idea which he at the same time wished and feared to explain.

"Christian, Christian!" he said, shaking his head, "do not torment yourself by dwelling on this nightmare. No, no; you are not the son of Baron Olaus! I would stake putting my hand in the fire on that."

"And yet," replied Christian, "is it not true that there is a certain resemblance between his features and mine? When he had fainted, and while his blood was dropping on the snow, his cruel and sardonic face assumed the expression of supreme repose which is given by death, and I gazed upon him in terror. No man, it is true (or so it seems to me), at least unless he has passed all his life before a mirror, or is a portrait-painter, can have a very exact idea of his own appearance; but still his face seemed familiar to me in a vague sort of way, and gradually it began to appear like my own. I had the same feeling when I saw him for the first time. I did not say to myself, 'I have seen him somewhere;' I said, 'I know him, I have always known him.'"

"Well, well," said M. Goefle, "and I too, by heavens! when I saw you the first time, noticed the same thing. And now again, at this very moment, when your face is serious and abstracted, I recognize, if not a resemblance, at least a similarity of outline that is striking — extraordinary. But it is precisely that, my dear friend, which makes me tell you: 'No, you are not his son!'"

"Really, M. Goefle, I do not understand you at all."

"Oh! that is not your case alone! I don't understand myself. And yet I have an idea, a fixed idea!—If that obstinate Stenson would only speak! But it was all in vain that I tormented him again to-day for two hours; he told me nothing of the slightest importance. Either he begins to wander at moments, or he pretends resolutely to be deaf and abstracted, when he does not wish to answer. If I had heard of this Karine, and had known that she was mixed up in our affairs, I might, perhaps, have drawn something out of him, at least in regard to her. You say that the danneman's son pretends that she could tell a great many secrets if she chose. Unluckily, she also is crazy, it seems, or else so intimidated and enfeebled that she is afraid to confess! However, it is absolutely necessary that we succeed in clearing up our doubts, for either I am a fool, Christian, or you are now in your own country, and perhaps are upon the point of discovering who you are. Come, then! think, help me! that is, listen to me. Your appearance at the new chateau has caused a great deal of trouble and anxiety there, and you must know—"

At this moment some one knocked at the door, after having tried in vain to open it without knocking. M. Goefle, unobserved by Christian, had cautiously drawn the bolt. Christian was going to open the door, when M. Goefle stopped him.

"Go under the staircase," he said, "and leave me to manage this business."

Christian, who was exceedingly preoccupied, obeyed mechanically, and M. Goefle went to open the door, but without allowing the unexpected visitor to enter. It was Johan.

"You again!" he said curtly, and in a severe tone. "What do you want, Monsieur Johan?"

"Excuse me, Monsieur Goefle, I want to speak to Christian Waldo."

"He is not here."

"He has, however, returned here; I know it, Monsieur Goefle."

"Look for him, but not in my apartment. I am at

work, and wish to be quiet. This is the third time that you have disturbed me."

"I ask a thousand pardons, monsieur, but since you share your room with him, I thought I might come again to convey his lordship's orders to this comedian."

"His orders — what orders?"

"In the first place, to get ready his entertainment; then to be at the new chateau at eight precisely, as yesterday; and, in conclusion, to play something very gay."

"You repeat yourself, my good fellow; you have already told me the same thing twice, and in precisely the same terms — But are you sure that you know what you are saying? Is not the baron seriously ill this evening? While you are prowling round the old chateau like a shadow, are you aware of what is occurring at the new chateau?"

"I have just seen his lordship this very moment," replied Johan, with his eternal smile of impertinent humility. "His lordship is quite well; and it is because he sent me here that I am forced, to my great regret, to be excessively importunate. Notwithstanding, I must add that his lordship is very desirous of conversing with the honorable M. Goefle during the comedy of marionettes."

"Very good; I will attend to it. I wish you good-evening."

Thereupon M. Goefle shut the door in the face of the disappointed Johan.

"Why all these precautions?" said Christian, coming from his retreat, where he had listened to this dialogue.

"Because something is going on here — I was about to tell you so when we were interrupted — that I do not understand. All day long, this Johan — the most detestable wretch alive, if I can judge from his appearance, and from Stenson's opinion — has done nothing but prowl around Stollborg, and you are the object of his curiosity. In the first place he questioned Stenson about you, who does not know you at all, and who only learned to-day (precisely from this Johan) that you and I were both of us stopping here. Then he had a long talk in the stable

with your servant Puffo, and another in the kitchen of the *gaard*, with Ulphilas. He would have made Nils talk if I had not kept him close by me the whole day. I really believe this spy tried to make your ass confess."

"Luckily, my honest Jean is discretion itself," said Christian. "But I do not see why the efforts of this lackey to see my face should make you uneasy. Since I have worn a mask, I have been accustomed to excite just such curiosity; but I intend to have done forever with this puerile mystery and with these childish persecutions. As I am obliged to return to the chateau this evening, I will go with my face uncovered."

"No, Christian, you must not do that; I forbid it. You must be patient for a few days longer! An important secret is challenging our investigation; it is our business to discover it, and I will discover it, or lose my reputation; but you must not show your face. You must not even let Ulph see you again. You are certainly threatened by some danger. Johan, with his stealthy, sidelong glance, is not the only person I have seen gliding about the passages of Stollborg. Either I am very much mistaken, or I noticed a thorough blackguard walking around the donjon on the ice, at just about nightfall—a certain fellow who has been honored by the baron his master with the fantastic name of Captain Chimère. With our comedy last evening, we may have put fire to powder. The baron unquestionably is suspicious about you, for some cause or other; and if you will take my advice, you will pretend to be ill, and not go to the new chateau at all."

"Oh, as to that, Monsieur Goeffe, I beg your pardon, but the baron cannot frighten me, no matter what he may do. If I am so fortunate as not to be related to him, I am in precisely the mood to defy him, and to squeeze vigorously any hand that ventures so much as to touch the tapestry of my theatre, if I choose to remain incognito. Remember that I have killed two bears to-day, and consequently that my nerves are a little excited. Come, come, pardon me, my dear uncle, but it is getting late, and I have only two hours to prepare for my exhibi-

bition. I am going to look for a play in my library ; that is to say, in the bottom of my box, and you must be so good as to play it with me, somehow or other."

"Christian, I don't feel like it to-day. I am no longer an actor, but a lawyer ; that is to say, a seeker of actual facts, to the very marrow of the bones. Your servant Puffo did not seem to me to be very drunk when I saw him, and he is here, no doubt, in the *gaard*. Stay, I am going out, and I will call him as I pass, and send him to help you, since you insist upon performing. It will do no harm, perhaps—it will keep you busy, and may avert suspicions. Puffo is devoted to you, is he not?"

"I don't know, I am sure."

"But if they should try to fasten a quarrel upon you, he would not leave you in the lurch? He is not a coward?"

"I don't think so : but feel no anxiety upon that point, Monsieur Goeffe. This good Norwegian knife, which my friends lent me for the hunt, is still by my side, and I answer for it that I will make myself respected without the help of any one."

"Beware of a surprise. That is the only thing I am afraid of for you. For my part, I cannot remain quiet for two minutes. Since you have told me about a child brought up secretly at the danneman's house, a child with fingers like yours —"

"Oh, nonsense !" said Christian, "I only dreamed the whole story, perhaps ; and, at any rate, I must not think about it now. I see at the bottom of this box my poor little marionettes, whom I am now going to exhibit for the last time, or the time before the last ; for this, M. Goeffe, is the only real and sensible conclusion to which I have been led by all my reflections. I will give up the fool's cap, and take the hammer of the miner, the axe of the wood-cutter, or the whip of the travelling peasant ! And for the rest, I laugh at it ! What difference does it make, whether I am the son of an amiable fairy or a wicked iarl ? I will be the son of my works ; and one need not rack one's brains to come to a conclusion so simple and so logical."

"That is right, Christian, that is right!" cried M. Goeffe. "I love to hear you talk so; but still, for all that, I have my idea — I hold on to it, I dig into it, I feed it, and now I am going to give it an airing. It may be absurd, but still it is possible! I feel a constant anxiety to see Stenson; I will tear his secret from him! I know, at present, how to set to work. I will return in an hour at the most, and we will go together to the chateau. I will call on the baron to find out what he wants with me, and will observe him carefully. He thinks himself shrewd, but I will be shrewder than he. Yes, that's the idea — courage! Au revoir, Christian! Come, Nils, light me.—Ah, stay, Christian! here, it seems to me, is Master Puffo!"

In fact, M. Goeffe passed Puffo as he went out.

"So, here you are!" said Christian to his servant. "Are you doing better to-day?"

"I am doing capitally, master," replied the Livornese, in an even ruder tone than usual.

"Well then, my lad, to work! we have not a moment to lose. We shall play *The Marriage of Folly*, the piece that you know best: you know it by heart, and will not need a rehearsal."

"No, if you don't put in too many of your new gags."

"I'll do as I choose about that; but I will not fail to give you your cues, so don't be alarmed. Go at once to the new chateau with the ass and baggage; put up the theatre, arrange the scenery. Stay — since we have selected the piece, you may as well take the manuscript. For my part, I will dress the actors, and follow you. If you must absolutely run through the scenes, we shall have time enough over there. The audience, you know, always takes a quarter of an hour to find seats and get quiet."

Puffo started to go out; but, after taking a few steps, paused and hesitated. Johan, while keeping him a prisoner at Stollborg without his knowing it, had aroused him against his master by his insinuations, and Puffo was impatient to get into a quarrel with him. Still, he knew him to be agile and determined, and perhaps also a

feeling of involuntary affection for Christian had glided, unperceived, into some hidden corner of his brutal and corrupt soul. He took courage, however.

"That is not all, Master Christian," he said; "I want to know who the rascal was who exhibited the marionettes with you last evening?"

"Oh, ho!" replied Christian, "you are beginning to be uneasy, are you? What makes you suspect that there was any performance last evening?"

"I know there was one, and that I took no part in it."

"Are you quite sure?"

"I was a little drunk," said Puffo, raising his voice, "I confess; but I have heard the truth to-day, and I know all about it."

"The truth," said Christian, laughing; "would not one say that I had concealed it from your excellency? I have not seen you to-day, Signor Puffo, and even if I had, I am not aware that I owe you an account—"

"I want to know who took the liberty of touching my marionettes?"

"Your marionettes, which belong to me, though you seem to forget it, will tell you, perhaps; ask them."

"I don't need to question them to know that some one or other took the liberty of replacing me, and, apparently, of earning my wages."

"Suppose it were so? were you in condition to say a single word last evening?"

"You ought, at least, to have tried me, or else to have given me warning."

"I must confess that I did not show you that consideration," replied Christian, impatiently; "but I omitted to do so on purpose, so as to avoid the temptation of punishing you, as you deserved, for your drunkenness."

"Punishing me!" cried Puffo, advancing upon him in a threatening manner. "Try it a little! Come on!"

At the same time he caught up a marionette, and brandished it over his master's head like a club. The weapon, though comical, was none the less dangerous, for the head of the *burattino* is necessarily made of very hard wood, so as to prevent it from being broken in the

stage fights. Holding the little figure by its leathern skirt, and hurling it like a flail, Puffo might have broken his adversary's head, and, perhaps, wished to do so. Christian seized the marionette as it came, and, with the other hand, caught Puffo by the throat, and threw him at his feet.

"Cursed drunkard!" he said, putting his knee on his breast, "you deserve a sound beating, but I scorn to strike you. Off with you! I discharge you on the spot, and never want to hear of you again. I have paid you your week's wages, and owe you nothing; but as you may have spent it all for drink, I will give you enough to return to Stockholm. Get up, and don't try any more of your deviltries, or I will strangle you!"

Puffo, who was a good deal bruised, got up in silence. Though brutal, he was not naturally an assassin, and he was humiliated and cowed. Perhaps he felt that he was in the wrong; but his first and great anxiety was to pick up a dozen pieces of gold that had slipped from his belt, and rolled over the floor.

"What is that?" cried Christian, noticing what he was about, and seizing him by the arm. "Stolen money?"

"No!" cried the Livornese, lifting his hand with an heroic gesture, which was sufficiently absurd; "I have not stolen anything here. That money is mine. They gave it to me."

"What for? Come, speak — I insist upon it!"

"They gave it to me because they wanted to. It is nobody's business."

"Who gave it to you? Was it not? —"

Christian paused, fearing to betray suspicions which it was more prudent to conceal.

"Out of my sight!" he said, "and go quickly; for if I discover that you are something worse than a drunkard, I will kill you on the spot! Go, and woe to you if you ever let me see you again!"

Puffo retreated in a great fright. Christian, to keep him at a distance, had laid his hand, purposely, on the major's large Norwegian knife, and the sight of this

terrible weapon was quite sufficient to alarm the Bohemian, whose great fear was that Christian would take his money from him, and insist upon knowing how he had obtained this unexplained wealth.

The Livornese left the donjon in a very undecided state of mind. Johan, who sometimes took the liberty of exceeding the baron's secret instructions, had not given him this money with a precise understanding that he was to undertake what the trembling Puffo, in the language of the road, called *a bad job*; but to persuade him to remain quiet in case his master should be provoked, and drawn into some unequal scuffle. Johan had got everything out of him that he knew; he had learned, through him, that Christian was fiery and intrepid. Without compromising the baron, he had given him to understand that his master had offended some very powerful person at the chateau, and that they had discovered him to be a French spy, and a very mysterious and dangerous person. The lie, although glaring, was not sufficiently gross to have much effect upon Puffo, for he did not know or care anything about politics; but what he did understand was, the sum of money slipped into his pocket. He was intelligent enough to follow out the following course of reasoning: "If they pay me for standing by, they will pay me more for acting!" Accordingly, he resolved to get the start of any one else. He attacked Christian, supposing that he would be without weapons, or means of defence; but he lost courage, and, perhaps, also faltered a little in his wicked purpose. Christian was so good, that the scoundrel's hand trembled, in spite of himself. Now that he was defeated and humiliated, what should he do?

While Puffo was reflecting to the best of his very limited ability, Christian, more depressed and fatigued in mind than in body, sat down to his coffee, and sank into a melancholy reverie.

"What a sad life!" he said to himself, gazing mechanically upon the marionette lying upon the floor, which had come so near cutting his head open. "What poor company men without education are! And yet I shall have to be

with them now more than ever ! If I return to the dregs of the people, whence I probably emerged, after trying in vain to elevate my condition, I shall often be obliged, I suppose, to put down, by the force of my fist, brutal wretches like this Puffo, who cannot be influenced by kindness and affection. Oh, Jean Jacques ! was it such a life as this that you dreamed of for your Emile ? And yet you yourself were stoned in your humble chalet, and were forced to abandon the rustic life you loved, because you could not make yourself feared by those who were incapable of comprehending you !

“Come, let me see you ! Which of you was it who came so near killing me just now ?” he continued, raising his voice to revive his spirits, and picking up the marionette, which was lying with its face to the floor. “O Jupiter ! you, my poor little Stentarello ! you, my favorite, my protégé, my best servant ! you, the oldest of my troupe, lost at Paris and found again so miraculously in the forests of Bohemia ! No, it is impossible ! you would not have harmed me ; you would rather have turned against the assassin. You are worth much more than a host of gigantic marionettes I know of ; stupid and wicked marionettes, who claim to belong to the human race, and whose hearts are as hard as their heads. Come, my little friend, put on a white collar, and let me brush your coat, which is covered with dust. I swear that I will never again abandon you ! You shall travel with me, though it must be in secret, since otherwise serious people would laugh at us. But still you shall go, and when you feel sad and lonely, because you miss the blaze of the footlights, we two will talk together and console each other. I will confide my sorrows to you, and your sweet smile and bright eyes will recall to my mind the follies of the past ; the dreams of love born and vanished within the gloomy walls of Stollborg ! ”

A child's laugh made Christian start and turn round. It was Master Nils, who had come in on tip-toe, and who was jumping with joy and clapping his hands at the sight of the animated, and, as it were, living marionette, moving and gesticulating on Christian's nimble fingers.

"Oh! give me that pretty little boy," cried the delighted child; "lend him to me a moment, so that I can play with him!"

"No, no!" said Christian, who **was** in a hurry to arrange Stentarello's toilet; "my little boy plays with no one but myself; and besides, there is no time. Is not M. Goefle coming back?"

"Oh! let me see all that!" resumed the enraptured Nils, casting a dazzled glance into the box that Christian had just opened, and where glittered, pell-mell, the laced hats, swords, plumed turbans, and pearl coronets of his miniature company. Christian tried to get rid of Nils by gentle means; but the child was so crazy to see and touch all these wonders, that he was obliged to speak in a loud voice, and roll his eyes fiercely, to keep him from running away with his actors and their wardrobe. Then he began to pout, and, going to the other side of the table, said he would complain to M. Goefle that no one would amuse him. His aunt Gertrude had told him that he would be amused when he went travelling, **and he wasn't** amused at all.

"But I don't care for you, you great wretch!" he said, making a face at Christian; "I am going to make some pretty paper boats, and I won't let you see any of them."

"All right, all right!" replied Christian, who kept at work arranging the costumes of the marionettes under the supposition that he could rely on M. Goefle's assistance; "make your boats, my child; make a great many of them, and leave me in peace."

While pinning hats and cloaks to the heads and around the necks of his little people, Christian glanced every moment at the clock, and grew impatient for M. Goefle's return. He wanted to send Nils to the *gaard* to beg him to make haste, but Nils pouted, and pretended not to hear.

"Provided," said Christian to himself, "we have time to read over the play once, it will be sufficient; without that, I shall be lucky if I can recall it myself, I have had so much on my mind to-day. Ah! I promised the major a hunting-scene; where shall I introduce it? No matter

where! An interlude, stolen from the scene of Moron with the bears, in the *Princesse d' Elide*. Stentarello shall be brave, charming; he shall laugh at people who kill bears through a net—like the baron, for instance. But, good heavens! I hope Puffo has not carried away the manuscript; I put it in his hands.”

Christian began to search everywhere for his manuscript. To write another would have required half an hour's work, and the clock was striking seven. He rummaged in his box, which contained the whole of his little repertory. He upset and turned over everything; he was in a fever. The idea of not going to the new chateau at the appointed hour; of appearing afraid to encounter the baron's hatred (for to this motive his absence might be attributed), was insupportable to him. He was seized with a sudden rage against his enemy, to which his love, perhaps, added intensity. He was burning to defy the Snow Man openly in Margaret's presence, to show him that an actor was more courageous than many of the noble guests of his chateau.

Just then he looked at Nils; he was very quiet and serious, being busily occupied in making what he was pleased to call his little boats. Around him there was a pile of papers, which he was cutting up for the purpose. He would take a slip of paper, fold it, refold it, and, if the boat did not succeed according to his liking, tear it, rumple it up, and throw it to the floor.

“Ah, bad boy!” cried Christian, snatching from him a handful of torn fragments; “you are cutting up my manuscript into boats!”

Nils began to cry and scream, declaring that the papers were not Christian's, and trying to fight with him to get them back.

Suddenly Christian, who was hastily unfolding the boats to try and collect the pages of his comedy, became serious, and remained motionless. These papers, in fact, were not his, the writing was not his; and yet his name, or rather one of his names, traced by an unknown hand, had, as it were, riveted his gaze. The first sentence he read aroused his curiosity to the utmost; and this sen-

tence, written in Italian, was as follows: "*Christian del Lago is fifteen years old to-day.*"

"Stay!" he said to the child, who kept on teasing, and demanding his paper, as he called it; "play with the marionettes, and leave me alone."

Nils, seeing a handful of little men on the table, rushed up to them with delight, and found enough to do in looking at them and touching them, while Christian, taking the chair that the child had just left, and placing the candle by his side, began to decipher the papers before him, consisting, apparently, of a file of old letters. The writing was detestable, and the Italian, style and orthography, all of a piece, but every word which he read, or guessed, seemed to him more and more extraordinary, and caused him the liveliest amazement.

"Where did you get these papers?" he said to the child, while continuing to collect the torn and crumpled fragments.

"Ah, monsieur, how handsome you are with your great moustache!" cried Nils, gazing in ecstasy upon the marionette.

"Answer, will you?" cried Christian; "where did you find these papers? Do they belong to M. Goeffe?"

"No, no," replied Nils, at last, after making him repeat the question several times. "I did not take them from M. Goeffe; he threw them away, and the papers he throws away are mine. They are for making boats; M. Goeffe said so this morning."

"You are telling a story! M. Goeffe did not throw these papers away. These are letters; people do not throw letters away, they keep them, or they burn them. You took them out of the drawers of this table."

"No."

"From the room, then, where he sleeps?"

"No, no!"

"Tell the truth, at once!"

"No!"

"I will pull your ears."

"No you won't; I'll run away."

Christian stopped Nils, who tried to make his escape with the marionettes.

"If you tell me the truth," he said, "I will give you a pretty little horse with a red and gold saddle-cloth."

"Let me see it."

"Now," said Christian, handing him the plaything, which was one of his properties, "speak, brat!"

"Well," said the child, "this is how it was: I went just now, to light M. Goefle to M. Stenson's house — you know who I mean, the old man, who, they say, cannot hear anything, who lives in the other court."

"Yes, I know; go on quickly, and tell the truth, or I will take back my horse."

"Well, I stayed there to wait for M. Goefle; I was in M. Stenson's room, where there was a fire, and M. Goefle was in the office next to it, talking loud to M. Stenson."

"What were they saying?"

"I don't know, I did not listen; I was playing making a fire in the chimney. And then, all at once, some men came into the office, and they said: 'Monsieur Stenson, his lordship has been waiting for you for an hour. Why do you not come? You must come at once!' And then they quarrelled about it, and M. Goefle said: 'M. Stenson cannot go; he has no time.' And M. Stenson said: 'I must go — I am not afraid of anything — I will go at once.' And then M. Goefle said: 'I will go with you.' Then I went into the office because I was afraid they were going to hurt M. Goefle, and there I saw three — or six men, dressed in very nice livery."

"Three — or six?"

"Or four — I could not count; I was afraid. But M. Goefle cried out, 'Go away with you!' and he pushed me on to the staircase, and threw this bundle of papers after me without any one seeing him. Perhaps he did not want them to know that he gave it to me so, and then I picked it up, and ran away, and that is all!"

"And you did not tell me, idiot! What if M. Goefle —"

Christian paused, knowing that it was useless to complain, and, gathering up the papers as quickly as possible,

he shut them up in his box, took the key, and hastened out. The events thickening around him were becoming more and more incomprehensible, and he felt very anxious about the lawyer's situation.

Nils had already burst into a roar at being left alone with the marionettes, which frightened him a little, fascinating as they were, when M. Goeffe met Christian in the passage, and brought him back into the bear-room. He was pale and agitated.

"Yes, yes," he said to Christian, who assailed him with questions, "fasten the doors. Something serious is going on here. Where is Nils? Ah, there *you* are, little one! Where did you put the bundle of papers?"

"He was cutting them up into boats," said Christian; "here they are, all torn, but nothing is wanting. I picked up every scrap. But what are these strange letters about me, Monsieur Goeffe?"

"They are about you, are they? Are you sure of it!"

"Perfectly sure."

"Have you read them?"

"I have not had time. Master Nils made it a difficult task, and then the writing is villanous; but I am going to read them. M. Goeffe, the secret of my life is there."

"In truth? Yes, I suspected, I was sure, Christian, that you were the person they treated of! But I gave my word to Stenson, on receiving this deposit, not to read the letters before his death or the baron's."

"But I, for my part, have made no promise, M. Goeffe. Chance has placed these papers in my hand: I have saved them from destruction; they are mine."

"Indeed?" said M. Goeffe smiling. "Well, now that I think about it, I had not finished my oath, after all, when we were interrupted—No, no, I swore solemnly yesterday, in regard to another deposit; but, as to this one, I remember now that I had not completed my oath. Besides, Stenson was about to confide in me fully. I had begun writing my questions, so as not to have to raise my voice to the poor deaf old man. I was speaking of

you, of my suspicions, and I felt that there were spies about us. You must have seen some of my writing in pencil, on the loose sheets?"

"Yes, I did, and thought that must have been the way of it. Read the letters, then."

"Letters, are they letters? Give them to me — But no, we ought rather to hide them. We are surrounded, watched, Christian. At this very moment I am sure they are rummaging and robbing Stenson's office. They have carried off Ulphilas. Who knows whether they will not attack us?"

"Attack us? But, in fact, it is quite possible! Puffo tried just now to take me by surprise, in the German fashion. He raised his hand upon me, and he had gold in his pockets. I was obliged to kick the clown out of doors."

"And you were wrong. You should have tied him, and shut him up here. He is now perhaps with the baron's cutthroats. Come, Christian, we must find a hiding-place for these papers before attending to anything else!"

"Pshaw! A hiding-place is never of any use."

"Yes, indeed!"

"Very well then, you find one, Monsieur Goefle, while I make ready my weapons; that is the surest way. Where are these cutthroats?"

"Who knows? I saw Johan and his band go out with Stenson, and I locked the door of the court after them. But they may come from the other side, for the lake is a solid plain now; they may have come already. Do you hear anything?"

"Nothing. And why, in Heaven's name, should they come and attack us here? Say, Monsieur Goefle, let us reason a little about our situation, and not be alarmed without any cause."

"You cannot reason about it, Christian, for you have no knowledge to go upon! As for me, I know — or I think I know — that the baron has fully resolved to discover who you are, and, when he is satisfied, who can say what course he will pursue? Possibly they will

keep us prisoners here, until he arrives at some decision. They have just arrested Stenson — yes, arrested, that is the word. At first, that scoundrel of a Johan came in and invited him politely enough: but when the terrified old man hesitated, and when I sought to detain him, the other servants showed themselves, and if he had resisted, would have carried him off by force. It was my intention to follow him. I am satisfied that they would not dare injure him before me, and I proposed to go with him into the baron's presence, and, if necessary, to stir up the latter's guests against him. In fact I actually did start in advance of them all, but, under cover of the fog, returned, for, on the other hand, to leave you alone — I could not make up my mind what to do! If the baron wants to extort some secret from Stenson, he will begin by wheedling him, and we shall have time enough to go to his rescue — that thought decided me. And now, Christian, let us go — Yet stay! — It is absolutely necessary that we should solve this mystery — that we should know the real facts of the case before acting! Stand sentinel, then, guard the door, they will not dare break it open — the devil! I am at home here: you are right. They will not venture to drag me, as they did that poor old overseer, before their master. What excuse could they offer?"

"None, most surely: so be tranquil, M. Goeffe. This great door is solid, that of the bed-room is no less so, and I can answer for the door of the secret chamber; I will guard them. Read, and read quickly. We, at least, have always an excuse for going to the new chateau, since they have not countermanded the comedy of marionettes."

"Yes, yes, certainly, we must know where we stand, and *who we are!*" cried M. Goeffe, exalted by the spirit of investigation, which is the soul, the inspiration of the lawyer's profession. "I shall get through with it sooner than you would, Christian, for arranging these fragments, and making out these hieroglyphs, is in the regular course of my business. Five minutes' patience, I ask no more

than that. As for you, Master Nils, talk low with your marionettes."

As he spoke, M. Goeffe, with remarkable promptness, began arranging the letters according to their dates, reading them as he went on, and completing the sense, where it was wanting, with a veritable eagle's glance. Every trace, every line of this mysterious package of papers he examined carefully, sometimes questioning Christian, and sometimes himself, as if to recall certain facts.

"'The young man is very happy in his home with the Goffredis — he is much beloved.' That refers to you, I should rather think. And yet, in certain places, he says: 'My nephew,' and it is still you he is speaking of. 'My nephew has gone into the country, to Lake Perugia, with the Goffredis. The young man is fifteen years old to-day — He is tall and strong, and resembles his father —' Oh, yes, certainly, Christian, you resemble him."

"My father? Who, then, is my father?" cried Christian. "Do you know?"

"Stay," said M. Goeffe, "handing him a medallion, which he drew from his pocket, with much emotion. Look at that. Stenson just confided it to me. It is a portrait closely resembling the original — authentic! — Might it not have been taken for you?"

"Heavens!" said Christian, gazing at the beautiful miniature almost with a feeling of terror; "I don't know, I am sure! It is a young man, richly dressed; is it not Baron Olaus in his youth?"

"No, no, God be praised, it is not he! But do not say a word, Christian, I must read on; I am beginning to understand! In another letter, you are designated as 'your nephew,' and no longer 'my nephew'; and in still another, 'your nephew.' It is quite evident that it is a precaution to turn aside suspicions in case the letters are intercepted, for you are not related either to the man who wrote these letters, or to Stenson, to whom they are addressed."

"Stenson! Is it to him, then, that some one has sent this accurate account of my health, my progress, and

my travels? for I saw enough to understand that this had been done, in turning over the leaves. Here is a letter in which they speak of my duel; see, it is dated at Rome, one thousand seven hundred—”

“Wait!—oh, yes, I see it. There is a letter every year. ‘He has had the misfortune to kill Marco Melfi, who was’—then follow reflections. ‘The cardinal has no wish to be revenged. I hope to discover what has become of our poor child.’ Ah, here is a letter from Paris: ‘It is impossible to find him. I might deceive you, but I do not wish to. I am afraid that he may have been arrested in Italy. While I am looking for him here, he perhaps is a prisoner in the castle of Saint Angelo!’ Stay, Christian!—don’t be impatient. Here is a letter which must be more recent. It is dated the sixth of last August, Troppau, Moravia: ‘I was really upon the right track this time—He took the name of Dulac in Paris, as I supposed, but he started on a journey, and, most unhappily, has perished quite recently. I have just been dining at an inn with a young man named Guido Massarelli, whom I knew in Rome, and who was well acquainted with him, and he informed me that he had been assassinated in the forest of’—illegible! ‘I shall give up, therefore, any further search for him, and as my little commercial transactions require me to go to Italy, I shall start to-morrow before daybreak. Do not send me any more money to help me on in my travels. You are not rich, for you have always been honest. That is the case, too, with your servant and friend, Ma—Mancini—Manucci.’”

“I know no such person!” said Christian.

“Manasses!” cried M. Goefle; “the person whom M. Guido mentioned yesterday, the little Jew who took such an inexplicable interest in you.”

“That was not his name,” rejoined Christian.

“No matter, it was the same person, I am sure of it,” said M. Goefle. “His name was Taddeo Manasses. Stenson told me so yesterday. This is the only time, in the course of the correspondence, that he signed either of his names in full, and it was perhaps the last time that

the poor wretch ever dipped his pen into ink ; for, according to Massarelli, he is dead, and I will stake my life upon it that Massarelli assassinated him. Stay, don't speak, Christian ! On informing Stenson of his death, Massarelli claimed to be in possession of a terrible secret, which he wanted to sell him, and threatened, if he would not come to terms, to carry it to the baron — the proof, no doubt. Was this poor Jew addicted to drinking ?”

“No, not that I know of.”

“Well, then, Guido must have assassinated him, for the sake of the little money he had in his possession. He found, no doubt, some letter from Stenson on his person, and learning from that of his whereabouts, came here at once to turn the adventure to account — Besides, this Massarelli may have given the Jew some narcotic when they dined together at the inn. But no, since it was after that that the Jew wrote — but in the evening, or the next day.”

“Alas ! what does it matter, Monsieur Goeffle ? It is quite plain that Massarelli discovered the secret, whatever it may be, and has revealed it to the baron ; but, as for me, I have not discovered anything as yet about myself, except that M. Stenson is interested in me, and that Manasses, or Taddeo, was his confidant, and has faithfully transmitted to him news about me, and finally, that my existence is very disagreeable to Baron Olaus. Who am I then, in the name of Heaven ? Do not make me languish any longer, Monsieur Goeffle.”

“Ah, patience, patience, my friend !” replied the lawyer, as he sought a hiding-place for his precious letters ; “I cannot tell you yet. I have been certain of the truth for the last twenty-four hours, as far as instinct and reason can make me so ; but I must have proofs, and these are not enough. I must get hold of them — where ? how ? Let me reflect — if I can ! for there is enough here to drive one crazy. Papers to hide — Stenson in danger — and we too, perhaps ! However — oh, yes ! this is the point, Christian : I want to be certain that it is you they have designs against, for then I shall know positively who you are.”

"It is easy to find out whether the baron's intentions are what you suppose. I will go over to the chateau to give my performance as if nothing were the matter, and if I am attacked, as I am so well armed to-day, I will try and make my adversaries confess."

"I really believe," said M. Goefle, who had finally succeeded in hiding the letters, "that it would be preferable to run the risk of a fight on the open lake than to wait here until they run us down in this gloomy old den. It is already nine o'clock, and we were to have been at the chateau at eight. Yet they have not sent to know why we are so late. That is singular! Stay, Christian! Is your gun loaded? Take it; for my part, I will take my sword. I am neither a Hercules nor a bully; but I understood fencing in my youth, like all students, and if we are waylaid and attacked by ruffians, I don't intend to let them slaughter me like a calf. Promise me, swear to me, to be prudent. That is all I ask."

"I give you my word that I will," replied Christian. "Come!"

"But that troublesome brat, who has fallen asleep playing, what shall we do with him?"

"Put him to bed, Monsieur Goefle; I don't suppose they have any designs on him."

"But those cutthroats will kill a child to stop it from crying, and that young one will yell with all his might; I can answer for that, if he wakes up and sees strange people about him."

"Well, the devil take him! I suppose we shall have to carry him with us. Nothing would be easier, if we don't meet badly disposed people; but, if there is any fighting to be done, he will be very much in our way, and may be injured himself."

"You are right, Christian; it would be more sensible to leave him in his bed. If there are spies around, they will soon know that we have gone out, and they will have no reason for coming in here. Keep your eye on the door. This time I shall not be very long in putting Master Nils to bed; he can sleep in his clothes."

XVII.

M. GOEFLE had scarcely had time to lay his valet-de-chambre on his bed, when he called Christian.

"Listen!" he said to him; "it is through this room that they are coming. They are knocking at the door."

"Who goes there?" said Christian, loading his gun and taking his stand before the door of the guard-room, which opened, the reader will remember, on the gallery that surrounded the court.

"Open, open — it is we!" replied a rough voice, in Dalecarlian.

"Who?" said M. Goefle.

There was no reply, and Christian added:

"Are you afraid to give your names?"

"Is it you, Monsieur Waldo?" said a sweet and trembling voice in reply.

"Margaret!" cried Christian, and throwing open the door, he perceived the young countess, and another young lady whom he had seen at the ball, but whose name he had forgotten, escorted by the faithful Peterson.

"Where are they?" asked Margaret, falling breathless, and almost fainting, upon a chair.

"Who? Of whom are you speaking?" he asked, terrified at her paleness and emotion.

"Major Larrison, the lieutenant, and the other officers," replied the other young girl, who was quite as much out of breath, and not less agitated than Margaret. "Have they not come?"

"No — were they to have come here?"

"They started from the chateau more than two hours ago."

"And — you are afraid some accident has happened to them?"

"Yes," replied Martina Akerstrom, for it was she; "we are afraid — I don't know what we were afraid of for them, since they started altogether; but —"

"But for whom then were you afraid?" said M. Goefle.

"For you, M. Goefle, for you!" replied Margaret,

eagerly. "We have discovered that you are in great danger here. Did you not suspect it? Yes, yes, for I see that you are armed. Have they come? Have you been attacked?"

"Not yet," replied M. Goeffe. "Is it certain, then, that we are to be attacked?"

"Oh! we are only too sure of it!"

"What! they threaten me also—me?" replied M. Goeffe, with the most perfect simplicity and good faith. "Speak, dear young lady—are you quite sure? This is really very strange!"

"I am not sure as to the latter point," said Margaret, whose paleness was suddenly dissipated by a vivid blush, but who avoided meeting Christian's eyes.

"Then," said M. Goeffe, without seeming to observe the young girl's embarrassment, "it is he—he alone that they have designs against?"

And he pointed to Christian, whom Margaret persisted in refusing to see or to name, which did not prevent her from replying:

"Yes, yes, it is he, Monsieur Goeffe; they want to kill him."

"And the major and his friends know this also? How is it that they have not come?"

"They are perfectly sure of it," said Martina, "and if they have not arrived, it is because they have had the same luck that we had; they have got lost in the fog, which is constantly increasing."

"You have been lost in the fog?" said Christian, deeply moved by Margaret's generous solicitude.

"Oh, only for a little while," she answered. "Peterson belongs to the country, and he soon found the road; but the gentlemen must have mistaken one shore of the lake for the other."

"Place a light in the window of the bear-room," said M. Goeffe; "it will serve to guide them."

"No, no," said Peterson, "they will not see it any more than they see the stars."

"No matter, try it, at any rate," said Martina.

"No, my dear friend," replied Margaret; "the assassins

sins are probably lost also, since they have not come. We will not help them to find their way before the officers—”

“We shall be very glad to welcome the officers, most surely,” rejoined M. Goeffe; “but at present there are three of us, and all well armed; I know Peterson, he is a strong ally — and then, my dear young ladies, is it not possible that there is some error here? Have you not mistaken mere inquisitive rogues for assassins? Where did you see them?”

“Tell them, Martina, tell them what we heard!” said Margaret.

“Yes, yes, Monsieur Goeffe, listen,” resumed Martina, assuming, artlessly, a pretty little air of importance. “Two hours ago — or two hours and a half, perhaps — we young folks, as they call us over at the chateau, were playing hide-and-seek in the outer buildings of the new chateau. I was with Margaret and the lieutenant. We had drawn lots for the different parties, and then we should have been afraid, we two young girls, to go all alone into gloomy galleries and dark rooms where we had never been; we were obliged to have a cavalier to accompany us! The lieutenant did not know much more about this part of the chateau than we did ourselves; it is so large! Well, we crossed a long, deserted gallery, and went down a little staircase, that was nearly dark. The lieutenant was leading the way, and as there were no corners or passages anywhere around that would be good for hiding, we went straight on, until we could scarcely see at all, and began to be afraid we should fall down some precipice, and then, at last, he stopped.

“‘I begin to recognize the locality now,’ he said; ‘we have come to the great tower, which is used as a prison. There can be no prisoners in it, for the door is open. If we go down into the cells below, I answer for it that they will have some trouble in finding us there.’

“With that he was going down, but the idea of burying ourselves in those subterranean dungeons, which are said to be so gloomy and terrible, frightened Margaret, and she begged him to stop.

“‘No, no,’ she said; ‘don’t go any further; stay at .

the entrance. Here is a recess in the wall, almost built up; let us go in there, and don't talk, for you know there are spies in this game, whose duty it is to wander about and listen, so as to tell the others where we are.'

"We did as Margaret wished; but scarcely were we in our hiding-place when we heard some one coming; and, thinking they were already on our track, we repressed our laughter, and scarcely even ventured to breathe. Then we heard the very words that I am going to repeat to you. They were spoken by two men who came out of the tower, and went through the long gallery that had brought us there. They were talking low, but they stopped for a few moments at the door of the tower, to have an explanation, and this is what they said:

"'Are you going to put me with the party detailed to guard the Italian again? I am tired of that sort of service.'

"'No, you are to come with us to the old chateau. The Italian is one of ourselves, at present!'

"'So; and what is to be done over there?'

"'I cannot tell you what the other said, for we did not understand it. It was slang talk, it seems, such as robbers use; but they repeated the name of Christian Waldo several times, and they spoke, also, of the lawyer.

"'The lawyer,' one said, 'oh, he will be of no account. A lawyer always runs away.'

"'That remains to be seen!' cried M. Goeffe. "And what then?"

"And then they said something about an ass, and a gold goblet, and a quarrel they were to engage in; it was all more and more incomprehensible. Finally, the two men, who had stopped just before us, as I told you, concluded their arrangements, and went away.

"'The rendezvous is at eight o'clock, on the lake,' said one, just as they started.

"'But suppose he does not come?' said the other.

"'In that case we will go on to Stollborg. We shall receive orders.'

"As soon as the two rascals had gone, the lieutenant

made us come out of our hiding-place, and said, in a whisper :

“ ‘ Not a word here ! ’ ”

“ He led us back cautiously to the great hunting-gallery, and then said :

“ ‘ Allow me to leave you, and to go in search of the major. ’ ”

“ The lieutenant had understood the slang of these brigands ; they were to accuse M. Christian Waldo of having stolen something, and to attack him, to carry him to the tower, and to kill him if he should defend himself ; and they had added :

“ ‘ And that would be the best of all ! ’ ”

“ The lieutenant was indignant. He said, when he left us :

“ ‘ The real mover in this business is perhaps of higher rank than we suppose. Politics is at the bottom of it. Christian Waldo must have some state secret. ’ ”

“ I give you my word that I have not,” replied Christian, who could not help smiling at the lieutenant’s simplicity.

“ I do not ask you, Monsieur Christian,” replied the good and ingenuous Martina ; “ but I know that the lieutenant, the major, and Corporal Duff, swore that they would do their duty, and protect you, even if this should prove a signal offence to his lordship the baron. However, they thought the greatest prudence would be necessary, and they urged us to keep the whole matter a profound secret. They started on foot, well armed, and as quietly as possible, for they wanted to take the assassins by surprise, and get possession of their secret.

“ ‘ Go on with the game,’ they said, ‘ and try and prevent the others from observing our absence. ’ ”

“ In fact, Margaret and I pretended to keep on playing, until the time came to separate and go and make our toilets for the evening ; but, instead of thinking of dressing ourselves, we could think of nothing but of looking out of the window of my room, so as to try and see what was passing on the lake. But the fog was so thick that it was quite impossible. We could not even dis-

tinguish where Stollborg was. And then we listened with all our ears, for sometimes in these thick fogs you can hear the slightest sounds with perfect distinctness. But they were making such a tumult in the chateau, and outside the moat, with their fanfares and fireworks, that it seemed as if they were doing it on purpose, so as to prevent the noise of a quarrel or fight from being heard. And so the time passed; and then suddenly Margaret began to be frightened —”

“And you also, dear Martina,” said Margaret, in some confusion.

“It was you, dear friend, who made me so,” said the fiancée of the lieutenant, frankly. “At last, like two mad creatures, we started off with Peterson, persuaded that we should meet the major and his friends, and that they would restore our courage. We thought, too, as Peterson knows the country perfectly, and scarcely ever makes a mistake, that we should be able to guide them to the old chateau, if they had lost their way. We came on foot, and did not go much astray, except that we arrived at the side of the *gaard*, instead of succeeding in coming straight to the court. But Peterson said:

“‘It is the same thing; we can go in this way just as well.’

“And, in fact, here we are, without well knowing how we got here. But in all this time we have not met a single person; and now that we are a little more tranquil about you, I think we have reason to feel seriously uneasy about the major, and the other officers.”

“Ah, Margaret!” said Christian, in a low voice, to the young countess, while M. Goefle, Martina, and Peterson consulted together to see what had best be done, “you came thus —”

“Ought I,” she replied, “to have allowed such a man as M. Goefle to be assassinated without trying to bring him assistance?”

“No, certainly,” replied Christian, who was too deeply and sincerely grateful to offend her delicacy, even by expressing his gratitude too warmly: “far otherwise; but your courage was none the less sublime. You might

have met these bandits. Very few women would have carried their devotion, their humanity, so far as to have come themselves —”

“Martina came with me,” rejoined Margaret, eagerly.

“Martina is engaged to the lieutenant,” said Christian; “she would not, perhaps, have been willing to do so out of consideration — for M. Goeffe.”

“I ask your pardon, Monsieur Christian, she would have come to help any one, no matter who, the moment that the life of a human being was at stake. But do not think of that now; can’t you learn whether these gentlemen are coming? for, when all is said, I cannot see that the danger is over.”

“No, in fact,” said Christian, collecting his ideas, “we are actually in danger. It is worth thinking about, now that you are here. My God! why did you come?”

And the young man, torn by conflicting emotions, was at the same time delighted because she had come, and tormented by the thought that she would, perhaps, be exposed to some terrible scene. Besides, would not the presence of these two young girls in Stollborg aggravate the difficulties of their situation in another respect? Might it not serve as the exact pretext that was wanting for an open invasion? Although Countess Elveda was a careless and heartless guardian, it was quite possible that she would notice her niece’s absence, if she had not already done so; that she would have her sought for, followed. Who could say?

“One thing is certain,” said Christian, “and that is that she must not be seen here.”

He thought of conducting her and her companion to Stenson’s *gaard*, where no one would have thought of looking for them; but the enemy, perhaps, were using Stenson’s dwelling, at this very moment, as a post of observation. In the midst of all these perplexities, Christian, who replied in a very distracted manner to M. Goeffe’s agitated questions, formed a resolution that he did not impart to any one; this was to quit the apartment, and face the dangers by which he alone was threatened, either in the passages of the old chateau, or on the

lake. For this purpose he provided himself with a lantern, so as to make as much show as possible in the fog, and went out without a word. He hoped that M. Goefle would not notice his absence immediately; but he had scarcely crossed the threshold of the door when Margaret started up, crying:

"Where are you going?"

"Yes, where are you going, Christian?" cried M. Goefle, hurrying after him. "Do not go out alone!"

"I am not going out," answered Christian, slipping rapidly out of the bear-room; "I am going to see whether the second door, that opening on the court, is fastened."

"What is he doing?" said Margaret to M. Goefle; "are you not afraid?—"

"No, no," answered the lawyer; "he promised to be prudent."

"But I hear him drawing the bolts of the second door; he is opening them!"

"He is opening them? Oh, then, our friends have come!"

"No, no! he is going out. I am certain of it!"

And Margaret started up involuntarily, as if to follow Christian. M. Goefle stopped her, and, making a sign to Peterson not to leave the women, he tried to pursue him himself. But Christian had already fastened the outer door, so as to prevent this very thing, and was running towards the main entrance of the court, calling Larrison in a loud voice, and holding himself on guard, in case he should be attacked by the assassins. Suddenly a ball, aimed at him, struck the lantern he was holding out of his hand, and left him enveloped in the white darkness, which the light of the moon could not penetrate, and which was clinging like a shroud to the earth.

At the sound of the pistol-shot a terrible oath escaped M. Goefle, who was excessively alarmed about his young friend: Martina uttered a cry; Margaret sank into a chair, and Peterson ran up to the lawyer. By their united efforts they might have succeeded in opening the door, but they did not understand each other. Peterson,

who was devoted to his young mistress, was thinking only of preventing the malefactors from entering, and did not suspect that M. Goefle, on the contrary, wanted it thrown open, so as to fly to Christian's assistance.

During the delay caused by this misunderstanding, the good lawyer swore roundly, while Christian, delighted at being free to act at last, rushed upon one of the brigands, the first he found in his path. The latter fled—deceived by the fog, he had not supposed him so near, and Christian pursued him, with shouts of insult and defiance, while he, in his turn, was followed, swiftly and silently, by another of the party. He heard the assassin's steps, plainly audible on the crisp, hard snow, behind him; and, through the ringing in his ears—for he was in a great rage, and the blood was coursing through his veins at a tremendous rate—it seemed to him that he could hear other steps and other voices approaching from the right and left. He could not doubt that he was surrounded, and, without losing his presence of mind, he rushed after his first assailant with more fury than ever, with the idea that it would not do to turn until he had disposed of him, since he might attack him from behind, while he was facing the others. Besides, he did not lose sight of his resolution to remove the struggle as far as possible from Stollborg.

He descended in this way the steep declivity leading to the lake, whose rapid descent, alone, indicated to him the direction in which he was going, for he could see nothing. But, just as he stepped upon the smooth, hard ice of the lake, there were several reports behind him, balls whistled close to his ear, and the man he was pursuing fell at two steps before him. Either the fugitive had been mistaken for him by his accomplices, or the latter had fired upon them both at random, thinking, perhaps, that their companion deserved to be shot, for having taken flight.

The man who had just been struck was Massarelli; at the moment that Christian strode over him he was uttering a last groan of agony, and he recognized his voice. He ran on, so as to gain time and make the

most of his position, while the assassins collected about Massarelli, or, at least, stopped to look at him, so as to see who they had killed. Pausing to listen, he heard these words :

“Let him lie ; that is all right !”

What did that mean? Had the assassins mistaken Massarelli for their proposed victim, and were they going to withdraw? or had they recognized their mistake, and would they continue to pursue him? By making rapid zigzags in the ice, he hoped to get rid of them, one by one, and he tried to make out, from their steps and voices, how many he had to contend with. He had, without thinking, kept on the soleless and seamless felt boots which had been lent him in the morning for the hunt, and this afforded him an immense advantage. Perfectly supple, he could move about in them as freely as if his feet were bare ; and, besides, they made scarcely any sound upon the ice, while he could hear every step of his companions, who were not so well shod for the occasion.

He listened once more. They were approaching him, but they did not see him, and seemed uncertain. Not ten steps off he heard these brief words :

“Hé ! It is I.”

Since they were meeting, unexpectedly, in the fog, they must have got separated. From that moment, nothing would have been easier than to escape them. Christian did not even think of such a thing. He was furious ; and he wanted, moreover, to prevent the scoundrels from returning to seek him at Stollborg. He called to them in a loud voice, naming himself, and defying them, drawing back scarcely at all, but tacking about, so as to irritate and draw them asunder. His hope was to come up with one of them without allowing himself to be surrounded by all, and he had his wits about him so completely that he succeeded, before long, in counting them. There were three of them still ; Massarelli had made the fourth.

In spite of his astonishing self-possession, Christian was tremendously excited, and, mingling with his other

emotions, he was conscious of a wild, fierce delight, like the intoxication of gratified vengeance. So strong was this feeling, that he felt almost disappointed when he heard still other steps behind him, steps as soft as his own, which he at once recognized as those of his companions, who were shod, like himself, in felt boots. He was afraid that the bandits would make their escape without fighting. He ran to meet his friends, and whispered, quickly :

"There they are, three of them ; we must take them prisoners ! Follow me, and silence !"

Turning instantly, he advanced in a straight line upon the enemy, and stopping near where he supposed them to be, shouted out his name again, and mocked and jeered at them for their awkwardness and cowardice. Just then one of the bandits wounded him in the arm with a dagger, and fell at his feet, stunned and suffocated by a blow which Christian gave him full in the breast, with the handle of his Norwegian knife. Christian was only slightly wounded, thanks to his reindeer-skin coat ; and he thanked heaven for having enabled him to resist his desire of serving the bandit as he had done the bear on the mountain. It was very important to capture one, at least, of the baron's bravos, living. The two others, concluding that all was lost with the loss of their chief, ran up to each other, but only to exchange a slang confession of defeat and flight — a despairing *sauve qui peut* ; but they did not take into account the major and the lieutenant, who were watching them, and who seized one, while only the third escaped.

"For the love of Heaven ! are you wounded, Waldo ?" said the major, while Christian assisted him to disarm the bandits.

"No, no !" replied Christian, who would not have felt his wound at all, but for the warmth of the blood that filled his sleeve. "Have you any cords ?"

"Yes, certainly ; enough to hang them all, if we had the right. We had fully resolved to make these fine gentlemen prisoners. But if you are not too much out of breath, Christian, give a blast on this trumpet, to try

and bring up our other friends, whom we have been waiting for and seeking for the last hour. Stay, here is the instrument."

"We had better fire off our guns," said Christian.

"No, no, there has been plenty of firing already. Blow the trumpet, I tell you!"

Christian did as he was requested, but the corporal was the only person who joined them.

"You see," said the major to Christian, "our promenade must have the appearance of a chance excursion, during which we have been lost, and have been looking for each other."

"I do not understand you."

"It must be so, I tell you, for a few hours, so that the baron may not suspect the issue of the affair too soon, and send against you the other rogues, whom, no doubt, he has in reserve. As for him," he added, in a low voice, "his turn will come, do not fear!"

"His turn has already come," replied Christian; "I will take charge of that."

"Softly, softly, my dear friend! You have no authority to act in this matter. That is my business; and now that we have a certainty, now that we have proofs, I am fully resolved to take rigorous measures. However, we cannot proceed against a noble, and a member of the Diet, without orders from higher quarters; but do not doubt that we will obtain them. What you have to do for the moment, my dear friend, is to obey me; for I call upon you in the name of the laws, and in the name of honor, to lend me such assistance as I may require, according to the orders that I may give you."

M. Goefle now ran forward, with his head bare, a torch in one hand and a sword in the other. He had got out through the door of the guard-room, after persuading the two young girls — but not without difficulty, for they were both of them alike fearless for themselves, and solicitous about the absent — to remain shut up in the bear-room under Peterson's protection.

"Christian! Christian!" he cried, "is this the way that you keep your word?"

"I forgot everything, Monsieur Goeffle," replied Christian, in a low voice; "it was too strong for me. How could I wait there until they came to break down the doors and fire upon the women? But no matter, we are victorious; return to Margaret, and reassure her."

"Yes, I will go at once," replied the lawyer, sneezing, "especially as I am catching a frightful cold; I hope," he added aloud, "that these gentlemen are coming to see us."

"Yes, certainly, that was the agreement," replied the major; "but we must first attend to our duties."

M. Goeffle went to reassure the ladies, and the other men proceeded to have Massarelli's corpse removed. They obliged the two prisoners to carry it to one of the cellars of the *gaard*, keeping them within range of their pistols, in case they should show any disposition to take flight. The prisoners were then firmly bound, and conducted to Stenson's kitchen, where the lieutenant and corporal made a fire, and installed themselves, to keep them in sight, while the major prepared to examine them in Christian's presence.

Christian lost all patience at seeing them proceeding so regularly in an affair which the major seemed to understand better than he did himself. However, the major explained to him that with such an adversary as the baron, it was not so easy as he thought to prove even an obvious and recognized fact.

"And then," he added, "I regret to see that we are somewhat deficient in witnesses. M. Goeffle only saw the conclusion of the affair. We find here neither M. Stenson, nor his nephew, nor your servant. I hoped that we should be in greater force to defend you, and to prove the facts *de visu*. The adjutant and the four soldiers whom I have sent for, have not yet appeared. Though our bostoelles and the torps of the soldiers are very near, the fog is so thick that several hours may pass before we have eight men here under arms."

"But what need of eight men to guard two?"

"Do you suppose, Christian, that the baron is going to remain quiet, when, for the first time, one of his dia-

bolical combinations has failed? I do not know what he will resolve upon, but you may be very sure that he will make an attempt of some kind, even if he should try to burn down Stollborg. That is why I have resolved to pass the night here, so as to be in position, with the help of my soldiers, to seize the other bandits, who will probably arrive before long, either with offers of service, or otherwise. The greater number of the baron's foreign footmen are nothing more than a band of thieves and assassins, and we must try and seize them all in some flagrant misdemeanor. Then I can guarantee that the magistracy will venture to pursue rigorously this powerful noble, and that he will be left without resources, since his peasants hate him too much to offer him any assistance. If we proceed in any other way, you may be sure that we should be the losing party. The baron would deny having had any responsibility in the matter, or would find means to effect the escape of our prisoners. You would pass for an assassin, and we should pass for visionaries, or at least for young officers without experience, taking the part of a guilty man and arresting honest people; for you can rely upon it that these two bravos are well trained. I am going to examine them, and you will see that they know how to tell their story. I wager that they have learned their lesson, and know it by heart."

In fact, the two bandits replied impudently that they had come by order of the baron to conduct the man with the marionettes, who was late with his performance, to the chateau; that the latter seeing among them one of his old comrades, against whom he had a grudge, rushed in pursuit of him, and killed him. He had then insulted and challenged the others, and the one who had wounded Christian declared that he had done so by mistake, while trying to seize a furious madman. "So furious," he added, "that he has broken my breast-bone, and that I am spitting blood."

"You see," said Christian to the major, "that I failed in my duty towards these gentlemen, in not allowing myself to be assassinated."

"And you will see," replied Larrison, "that the assassins

will escape the gallows! According to our laws, capital punishment can only be inflicted upon criminals who confess. These fellows know this well, and however absurd their defence may be, they will stick to it. Your cause, perhaps, will not be as good as theirs. This makes it necessary for us to be doubly on our guard, for do not doubt, Christian, that we shall remain with you, and stand by you through it all."

"Oh, Christian has a very good cause!" said M. Goeffe, who had come to listen to the examination, and who, now that it was concluded, was conducting his guests to his apartment, which he called his bear-manor. "We should have plenty of weapons against the baron if we could succeed in freeing old Stenson, who has been carried, whether he would or not, to the chateau. You must help us, gentlemen, to accomplish it."

"That would be quite out of my power, M. Goeffe," said the major. "The chatelain is judge on his own domain, and consequently in his own house. I do not know what M. Stenson's case can have in common with Christian's, but my advice is not to complicate this affair with any other. Above all things, I should like to know whether Christian has chanced to find a gold goblet in his ass's pack-saddle, which the baron—like Joseph of old, wishing to try his brothers, but, I presume, with much less pacific intentions—ordered to be placed there."

"Upon my word," said Christian, "I don't know anything about it; let us go and see."

They went to the stable, where they found Puffo, pale and trembling, in a corner. They searched him, and found the goblet about him. He begged for mercy, and confessed after his fashion. An hour before he had seen Master Johan, he said, bring this precious object there, and had guessed what his design was. Not supposing that he was watched, he had resolved to take it, so as to carry it back to the chateau and prevent his master from being accused of a theft of which he was innocent; but when he tried to go out, he found that the stable-door was fastened, and in spite of all his efforts he had been unable to open it; which was the reason that he had not,

gone to his master's assistance during the combat. In consequence of these very suspicious statements, the major ordered Puffo to be bound like the rest, and conducted to the *gaard*, where Peterson, summoned to lend assistance, had taken the place of the officers in watching the three prisoners. The gold goblet was taken in triumph by M. Goeffe, and placed upon the table of the bear-room.

Meanwhile, Martina Akerstrom ran to meet her betrothed, without the slightest fear of what people would say, and without being the least embarrassed by the presence of the major and the corporal. The good and simple-hearted child, who was making tea for "those poor gentlemen, who must be so cold," had now only two causes of anxiety: the uneasiness that her absence might be occasioning her parents, and the want of sugar for her-tea. She requested to have some one sent to the new chateau to reassure the authors of her being, and to bring back some sugar.

Nils, who had been waked up by the noise around him, and who was very much delighted at beholding so much fine company, was able to gratify good Martina as to the latter point, for the child had an excellent reason for knowing where the sugar was to be found which Ulphilas had brought in the morning; but it was not so easy to comply with her first request. They had no messengers, and the major, besides, was anxious to take down forthwith Martina's deposition, together with that of the lieutenant, in regard to the conversation between the bandits, which they had overheard two hours before at the entrance to the tower of the new chateau. As this was the all-important point in the affair, he required them to repeat the whole conversation with the utmost accuracy; and, as he wrote down their statement, he expressed his regret that the third witness, Countess Margaret, was not present, to add on her signature.

Margaret was in the guard-room, where Christian, who had hurried on in advance for the purpose, had begged her to go, so that she need not be seen by the young officers, in whose eyes there would not have been the same excuse for her presence as for Martina's: the plaus-

ible, and, in Sweden, sacred excuse of having come out of anxiety for the safety of her betrothed. But the young countess, who was standing close to the door, heard that her assistance was required, and knowing well that she need have no fear of being slandered or misjudged by any of the persons present, all of whom were known to her, threw the door open and came in. She was eager to swear, as well as the others, that the accusation of theft which the infamous baron had intended to bring against Christian, was a conspiracy that had been announced, beforehand, in her presence; and to sign her name to the statement to this effect.

On seeing her, the major and the lieutenant could not repress an exclamation of surprise, but M. Goefle, with his usual presence of mind, undertook to explain everything.

Mademoiselle Akerstrom could not have come alone, he said. She had no one to accompany her, and the officers had charged her so strictly to keep perfectly silent as to the affair, that she could not venture to take any other escort than the servant of Countess Margaret, who was in the secret as well as herself. Naturally, Countess Margaret had wished to accompany her friend, whom Peterson otherwise might have objected to escorting, on account of the bad weather. M. Goefle, once launched, brought forward a number of good reasons of a similar character, to prove how natural it was that she should have come. Martina, with her primitive simplicity, might, perhaps, have said that he did not understand what had really happened, and so far was she from suspecting Margaret's predilection for Christian, that she would infallibly have done so, if she had not been absorbed in the all-important duty of serving tea, and even porridge, with the assistance of Nils; who, moreover, had discovered in the *gaard* the dishes intended by the absent Ulphilas for his uncle's supper, and that of the guests of Stollborg. The gloomy bear-room, therefore, presented, for the moment, a tranquil scene, which formed a wonderful contrast to its previous aspect; one of those eternal contrasts which nature and destiny are constantly

presenting in every life : now agonies, struggles, dangers ; and the very next moment, a home circle, a repast, conversation. However, M. Geofle and Martina were the only two of the company who sat down to their supper. The others swallowed a few mouthfuls standing, and in great haste, while impatiently awaiting either for new events to occur, or for a reinforcement which would enable them to form new resolutions.

It is certain that every person in this singular gathering had cause for great anxiety. Margaret asked herself whether she would ~~not~~ be missed and sought after by her aunt, in consequence of the necessary change in the programme of the evening's entertainment at the new chateau, occasioned by the absence of the *burattini* ; and whether Mademoiselle Potin herself would not share her surprise and alarm, on learning of the continued absence of Martina, with whom she had left her. Martina did not take the anxiety of her family so much to heart. Thoroughly practical and unimaginative, she said to herself that the chateau was very large, that her mother trusted her implicitly, and being herself very fond of cards, was not in the habit of looking after her when she went hither and thither, from hall to hall, with her young companions ; and lastly, that the soldiers might arrive at any moment, when she would be once more at liberty. But when she thought how small a number of defenders Stollborg had, she felt for the moment very anxious about her lover, and thought the reinforcement very slow in arriving.

Christian, in his anxiety for Margaret, scarcely thought about his own perils. The major was uneasy both for Christian and for himself. He continually repeated aside to the lieutenant that he did not consider the affair at all in a proper shape to be brought before a court. The lieutenant was troubled because the major was so ; and as for M. Geofle, he was greatly alarmed about old Stenson, and his apprehensions about him led him back to his inward cogitations about Christian's birth and destiny.

The situation, in short, was not reassuring for any of them, when at last they heard a knocking and ring.

ing at the door of the court. The officer and soldiers they were waiting for had perhaps arrived, but there was an equal chance that it was a second band of bravos, despatched by the baron to assist or deliver the first. The major and the lieutenant loaded their pistols, and rushed out, ordering Christian, with the legal authority with which they were clothed by their position, to remain behind them, and make no movement until at their command. Then Larrson, at the risk of being struck down by the scoundrels whom he wished to arrest, resolutely opened the door of the court himself, and, on doing so, recognized with joy his friend the adjutant, and the four soldiers who lived nearest to his cantonment. From that moment he was safe. The baron was of course impatient to learn the issue of his scheme, and on receiving no intelligence in regard to it, he would not fail to send a new band of his foreign footmen to discover what had happened, but they would now be prepared to receive them.

The adjutant made his report, which was brief. He had got lost with his men, and had only discovered Stollborg by accident at last, after wandering for a long time in the fog. As far as he could judge, he had not met any one during the whole time; if this had happened, it had been without his knowledge.

"However," he added, "the fog is beginning to lift about the shores of the lake, and in less than a quarter of an hour it will be quite possible to make a round. Moreover, as the noise of the fanfares and fireworks has entirely ceased at the chateau, we can distinguish, now, the slightest sounds from without."

"It will be all the easier to make a round," replied the major, "since we have with us a man of the country, a certain Peterson, who has the divining instinct of the peasants, and who, even now, could lead you anywhere; but wait awhile longer. Stand sentinel at the two outer gates, in profound silence, and keep well concealed. Close the doors of the pavilion of the *gaard*. See that the prisoners are well guarded, and threaten them with death if they speak a word, but let this be merely

a threat. The one dead man on our hands is one too many; we may be held responsible for his death ourselves."

XVIII.

THE brave and prudent major had just made these arrangements, when a shadow passed close to him just as he was groping his way back to the bear-room to continue his examination, for he had yet to receive M. Goefle's opinion — a most important one — about all that had happened in relation to Christian. This shadow moved with an uncertain step, and the major resolved to follow it, and did so, until, on encountering the wall of the donjon, it began to swear in rather a mild voice, which Christian recognized as that of Olof Bætsoi, the son of the danneman.

"Whom do you want to see, my child?" he said, taking him by the arm. "And how is it that you have come here, instead of returning to your house?"

As he spoke, they all three entered the bear-room together.

"Faith, if you had not been there," said Olof to Christian, "I should have been a long time looking for the door. I know the outside of Stollborg well, I could come to it with my eyes shut, but I don't know anything about the inside! I have never been here in my life before. You can suppose that I could not return to the mountain right off, in this cursed weather. At last it began to brighten a little, and, after passing two hours at the major's bostoele, I set out on foot, lest my father should be uneasy; but, first of all, I wanted to bring back a portfolio which you left in the sleigh, Herr Christian. Here it is. I have not opened it. Whatever was in it you will find as you left it. I did not wish to intrust it to any one, for my father has often told me that papers are sometimes more precious than money."

And Olof, in concluding, handed Christian a portfolio of black morocco, which he did not recognize at all

"It is yours, perhaps," he said to the major. "It may have been in the coat that you lent me."

"No, I never saw it before," replied Larrison.

"Then possibly it belongs to the lieutenant?"

"Oh, no indeed!" cried Martina; "he has no portfolios, except those that I embroider for him."

"It is easy to find out, at any rate," said the major; "he is close by, in the *gaard*."

"Wait a moment!" cried M. Goefle, who was always on the breach with his fixed idea. "Did you not tell me, Christian, that you had upset the baron this evening, on returning from the hunt?"

"I told you that the baron had overturned me, and was upset himself in consequence," replied Christian.

"It is all the same thing," rejoined the lawyer; "whatever was in the two sleighs must have rolled pell-mell together on the road; and this —"

"It belongs to the physician, I wager!" said Christian. "Leave it here, Olof; we will send it to him."

"Give it to me!" resumed M. Goefle, in a brief, authoritative tone. "The only way of finding out to whom an anonymous portfolio belongs, is to open it, and that shall be my duty."

"You assume the responsibility, Monsieur Goefle?" said the scrupulous major.

"Yes, monsieur," replied M. Goefle, opening the portfolio, "and I call upon you to witness what I do. You are here to examine the facts of a lawsuit, which it will perhaps be my mission to plead. Here is a letter from M. Johan to his master. I know his writing, and at the first glance, I see in it: 'The man with the marionettes — Guido Massarelli — The chamber of roses!' — Ah, indeed! the baron, like the senate, assumes the privilege of having his own! Major, this document is very important, and the other, perhaps — for there are two — is still more so. Your commission requires you to acquaint yourself with them."

"May I go?" said the young danneman, who, like the peasants of all countries, was terribly afraid of the law, and who accordingly, as soon as he began vaguely to

understand that the examination for a suit was going on, wanted to make his escape, lest he should be involved in it by having to give his testimony.

"No," replied the major, "you must remain and listen."

He turned to Margaret and Martina, who were whispering together about the possibility of returning to the new chateau, and laid the same injunction upon them.

"I beg and require you," he said, "to remain also, and listen. Our opponent is very powerful, and we may be accused of having forged false proofs. In this case documents have been placed in our hands in your presence, and you must learn their contents at the same time with ourselves."

"No no!" cried Christian; "these ladies must not be mixed up in a lawsuit."

"I am grieved that it must be so, Christian," replied the major; "but the laws are stronger than we, and I shall do what they require me to do, rigorously. A man has been killed this evening whom it would certainly be more to our advantage to hold alive. I know that you had nothing to do with this, and that you yourself were wounded in the scuffle in which he perished. You are passionate—you are brave and generous—but you are not prudent in what concerns yourself. As for me, I tell you that this affair may lead you to the scaffold, because you acknowledge honestly having given provocation to your enemies, while the rogues deny insolently their part in the transaction. Let us read, then, and neglect no means of making the truth triumph."

"Yes, yes, major, read, I am listening!" cried Margaret, who had turned pale as she looked at Christian's bloody sleeve; "I will testify, no matter at what cost!"

Christian would have refused to take advantage of the devotion of this noble girl, and he could ill endure the authority which the major assumed over her. The major, however, was right, and Christian felt this, since in this affair the honor of the officer was at stake no less than his own. He seated himself brusquely, and covered his face with his hands to conceal and repress the vehe-

ment emotions by which he was agitated, while the major read in a loud voice the journal of Master Johan, written by himself, and sent to the baron during the hunt.

"This seems to me a very mysterious document," he said, on concluding it; "it proves a deep-laid plot against Christian, but —"

"But you cannot understand," said M. Goefle, who, while the major was reading, had rapidly glanced through the second paper contained in the portfolio, "such hatred against an unknown, without name, without family, and without fortune, on the part of the high and mighty seigneur the Baron de Waldemora. Well, for my part, I understand it perfectly, and, since we see the effect, it is time to know the cause; here it is — Lift up your head, Christian de Waldemora!" added M. Goefle, striking the table with energy; "for Heaven has led you here, and old Stenson was right in saying, 'The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.'"

During the silence that followed — for all were struck dumb with amazement — M. Goefle read aloud what follows:

"Declaration intrusted by me, Adam Stenson, to Taddeo Manasses, Merchant, born in Perugia: To be delivered up to Christian on the day when the circumstances herein mentioned shall permit:

"ADELSTAN CHRISTIAN DE WALDEMORA, son of the noble Seigneur Christian Adelstan, Baron de Waldemora, and the noble lady Hilda de Blixen, born the fifteenth of September, 1746, in the castle of Stollborg, in the chamber called that of the bear, on the domain of Waldemora, province of Dalecarlia;

"Secretly confided to the care of Anna Bøetsoi, wife of the danneman Karl Bøetsoi, by me, the undersigned, Adam Stenson, and by Karine Bøetsoi, daughter of the above-named, and confidential waiting woman of the deceased Baroness Hilda de Waldemora, *née* de Blixen;

"The said infant suckled by a tame doe, and brought up in the house of the said danneman Karl Bøetsoi, on

the mountain of Blaakdal, until the age of four years, where he passed for the son of Karine Boetsoi, who, out of devotion for her deceased mistress, consented to be thought bewitched, and in communication with evil spirits, and who thus preserved the child, of whom she called herself the mother, from the pursuit of his *enemies*;

“The said child, carried away by me, Adam Stenson, to withdraw it from suspicions, by which his safety was beginning to be compromised, in spite of the precautions hitherto taken,

“Was taken by me, the undersigned, to Austria, where I have a married sister, who can testify to having seen me arrive at her house with a child named Christian, speaking the Dalecarlian language;

“And, by the advice of my very faithful friend and confidant, Taddeo Manasses, of the religion of the Old Testament, and formerly well known in Sweden, under the name of Manasses, and very highly esteemed by his lordship the late Baron Adelstan de Waldemora, as a man of his word, and of discretion and honesty in his business, the trading in objects of art, of which the said baron was a great amateur;

“I, the undersigned, went to the city of Perugia, in Italy, where then resided the above-mentioned Manasses, and where, during the carnival, I presented myself, being masked, to the very honorable couple, Silvio Goffredi, Professor of Ancient History in the University of Perugia, and Sophia Negrisoni, his legitimate wife, of the family of the illustrious physician of that name;

“And to them surrendered, confided, and, as it might be said, gave the said Christian de Waldemora, without making known to them his family name, his country, or the special reasons which had made me resolve to separate from him;

“In giving this well-beloved child to the above-mentioned Goffredis, I believed that I was fulfilling the wish of the deceased Baroness Hilda, who desired that he should be brought up far from *his enemies*, by learned and virtuous people, who, without any selfish motive, would love him like their own son, and make him what he should be,

in order to sustain worthily, some day, the name he is to bear, and the rank he is to recover, after the death of *his enemies*, the which death, according to the order of nature, ought greatly to precede his own ;

“ And, in case the death of the undersigned should occur before that of the *said enemies*, the undersigned has charged Taddeo Manasses to make such inquiries as may be necessary, so that, at the death of *his enemies*, Christian de Waldemora should be warned, and put into possession of the present declaration : in faith of which —after having made a contract with my good friend Taddeo Manasses, who is never to lose sight of the said Christian de Waldemora, who is to reside where he shall reside, and to come to his assistance if other protection shall fail him ; who, in case of serious illness, threatening him with death, is to put another person sure as himself in his place, to fulfil the same duties ; and finally, who is to give once a year news of his welfare to the undersigned—the undersigned, wishing to keep his place in the chateau de Waldemora, so as not to arouse suspicions, and to earn money to provide against coming emergencies, the probable removals, and journeys of Taddeo, and the eventual needs of the said child, quitted, not without grief, the city of Perugia, to return to Sweden, the sixteenth of March, 1750, believing and hoping to have done what was best to preserve from all danger, and to place in a happy and honorable situation, the son of his deceased master and mistress.

“ ADAM STENSON.

“ *Witness :*

“ TADDEO MANASSES,

“ *Sworn keeper of the paintings in the Exchange, at Perugia.*”

“ Speak, Christian !” said M. Goeffe to his young friend, who remained silent and stupefied. “ Everything must be verified. Was this Manasses really an honest man ?”

“ I have no reason to doubt it,” replied Christian.

“ Did he not offer you assistance, at one time, on the part of your family ?”

“ Yes ; I refused it.”

"Do you know his signature?"

"Perfectly. He had several business transactions with M. Goffredi."

"Look at this: is it his writing?"

"It is his writing."

"For my part," said M. Goefle, "I recognize perfectly, in the body of the document, the hand and style of Adam Stenson. Will you be so good as to open this portfolio, major, and verify the similitude? These are the accounts of his affairs, prepared and signed by the old steward at nearly the same period; that is to say, in 1751 and 1752. Besides, his writing has not changed, and his hand is still firm. Here is the proof of it: these three verses of the Bible written yesterday, and whose application, as interpreted by him, is quite evident, and will be useful in evidence."

The major made the verification, but the whole affair, if not utterly enigmatical, still seemed to him very obscure. Had the baron forged false documents to establish that his sister-in-law had left no heirs to contest his rights? He was quite capable of this, but M. Goefle had seen these documents. They were actually in his possession, having been confided to him by his father, whom he had succeeded.

"I have these documents at my house in Gevala, in fact," replied M. Goefle. "They have been verified by experts, and are authentic; but has it not been fully proved, at present, that they were extorted from the Baroness Hilda by constraint or fear? Be calm, Christian, all will be explained. Stay, major, here is another piece of evidence, discovered yesterday, in a dress, which I will show you; a letter from Baron Adelstan to his wife: read it, and calculate the dates. The hope of maternity was confirmed on the fifth of March, perhaps after two or three months of uncertainty. The child was born on the fifteenth of September; the baroness took refuge here during the first few days of the said month. She was probably kept a prisoner here, and she died on the twenty-eighth of December, of the same year. Here is another proof: look at this miniature!

Look at it, Margaret Elveda! It is Count Adelstan, who certainly did not have it painted for the emergencies of a suit; the painter is celebrated, and he has dated and signed his work. And yet it is the portrait of Christian Waldo! The resemblance is striking. Lastly, look at this life-size portrait of the count. The resemblance is quite as remarkable. This is not the work of such a skilful artist, but he has rendered the hands faithfully, and you can see the bent fingers: show yours, Christian!"

"Ah!" cried Christian, who was walking up and down the room in a state of extreme excitement, and who allowed M. Goefle to seize his trembling hands, "if Baron Olaus has made my mother suffer martyrdom, woe to him! These hooked fingers shall tear his heart from his breast."

"Let him give vent to his Italian passion," said M. Goefle, who had risen, fearing that Christian was going to rush out. "He is a generous nature; I know him—I know his whole life. He must give voice to his grief and his indignation; do not you understand? But have patience, Christian! the baron, perhaps, has not been so criminal in the past as we suppose. We must learn all the particulars—we must see Stenson again. It is absolutely necessary, major, that Stenson should be delivered and brought back here, and yet you will not consent to do it."

"You know perfectly well that I cannot!" cried the major, very much agitated and excited. "I have no rights over the authority of the seigneur, above all in the punishment of a domestic, and if the baron wants to make this old man suffer, he will not want for pretexts—"

Here the major was interrupted by Christian, who could no longer restrain his impetuosity.

"What!" he cried, "do you not see that they shrink from nothing in that den? I understand, too well, what they mean by their *chamber of roses*, as they call it in bitter and horrible mockery. And that poor old man, who has nothing left but his breath, that faithful servant, who saved me from *my enemies*, as he says in his declaration, and who, after that long and fatiguing journey,

has devoted to me a whole life of privation and labor silently endured, shall I leave him now to perish for me, at this very hour, in torments? No, it is impossible; you shall not hold me back, major! I do not recognize your authority over me, and, even if I must cut my way out from here, sword in hand — well, so much the worse, you would have it so.”

“Silence!” cried M. Goefle, snatching from Christian’s hands the sword which the young man had just seized from the table. “Silence! Listen! some one is walking over our heads in the walled-up room.”

“How can that be possible,” said the major, “if it is really walled up? Besides, I do not hear anything.”

“Nor do I hear any footsteps,” replied M. Goefle, “but be quiet, and look at the chandelier.”

They looked without speaking, and not only did they see the chandelier tremble, but heard also the faint jingling of the brass ornaments striking together, as they were shaken by some movement in the upper story.

“It must be Stenson!” cried Christian. “No one else can know the outside passages.”

“But are there any?” said the major.

“Who knows?” replied Christian. “For my part, I think so, though I was not able to satisfy myself fully. I noticed a breach in the wall as high as to the second story, but that did not seem to me practicable. But hush! — do you hear anything more?”

They listened, and heard, or thought they heard, a door open, and then followed a faint knocking or scratching on the walled-up door of the bear-room. Had Stenson escaped from the hands of his enemies, and not daring to return to the *gaard* by the court, which he would suppose to be in their hands, had he entered the donjon by a passage known to himself alone? Was he calling his friends to his assistance, or giving them a mysterious warning, that they might expect a new attack? The major considered these conjectures chimerical; but, before they could make any investigations, they were interrupted by the lieutenant, who entered with Danneman Bøetsoi.

“Here is one of our friends,” he said, “who has come

from our bostoelless, where he has been looking for his son. Is he not here?"

"Yes, yes, my father!" replied Olof, who was very much alarmed at all that he had heard, and was quite pleased to see the danneman arrive. "Were you uneasy about me?"

"Uneasy, no!" replied the danneman, who had just descended a dangerous mountain-road in this frightful weather to look for his child, but who considered it derogatory to his paternal dignity to acknowledge his solicitude. "I knew that our friends would not let you start alone; but, because of the horse, which might have been lamed—"

While the danneman was explaining his anxiety after this fashion, the lieutenant made a communication to the major, by which the latter seemed very much struck.

"What is the matter?" asked M. Goeffe.

"The matter is," replied Larrison, "that we have, one and all of us, given ourselves up to gloomy ideas that are making us very ridiculous. The lieutenant, while making his round, heard what seemed to be the lamentation of a human voice sweeping through the air, and the soldiers are so frightened at all that they have heard of the Gray Lady of Stollborg, that, but for their excellent discipline, they would already have decamped. It is time to have done with these dreams, and since there is no way of penetrating into this walled-up room from within, we must examine the outside of the building carefully, and see whether the brigands of the new chateau are not making use of this phantasmagoria at this very moment, to entrap us in some way. Come with us, Christian, since you are convinced, you say, that there must be some means of climbing up there."

"No no!" replied Christian; "it would take too long to look, and perhaps we should not find a practicable ascent after all. It will be surer and quicker to break down this wall. It is only to knock out the first brick."

Even while talking, Christian had torn the great map of Sweden from its rings, and, armed with the hammer that he used in his scientific excursions, he attacked the partition under it with desperate vigor, sometimes strik-

ing the resounding brick surface with the square end of the instrument, and sometimes thrusting the sharp edge into the holes he had succeeded in making, pulling down violently great masses of the wall, welded together with mortar, and which fell with a hollow sound upon the sonorous staircase. It would have been useless to oppose him. He was possessed, driven on by a sort of fury, that compelled him to escape from the inactivity to which he had been condemned. The strange suspicions he had already conceived that some person was imprisoned in this ruin, returned to him like a nightmare. He was under such excitement that he was even ready to admit the truth of the superstitious ideas to which M. Goefle had yielded belief in this very place, and to suppose that he had been summoned by a supernatural warning to discover the infernal secret which had enveloped his mother's dying moments with gloom and mystery.

"Stand out of the way! stand out of the way!" he cried to M. Goefle, who, impelled by a similar anxiety, mingled with curiosity, was hurrying up every instant to the foot of the staircase; "if the wall should crumble and fall suddenly, I could not prevent it."

In fact, the superadded partition, which extended over quite a large surface, was completely undermined by Christian's furious onslaught; it was giving way, tottering, falling in every direction. The intrepid assailant was covered with dust, and seemed protected only by a miracle in the midst of a rain of bricks and cement. His friends dared not speak any longer; they scarcely dared to breathe; every instant they thought to see him buried under the falling fragments, or struck by some flying brick. A cloud enveloped him, when he cried:

"Victory! here is the continuation of the staircase. Bring a light, Monsieur Goefle! —"

And, without waiting, he rushed into the darkness. But in the few seconds that elapsed, while he was groping for the door, which he found half-open before him, the major had time to join him.

"Christian," he said, holding him back, "if you have any friendship for me, any deference for my rank, you

will let me go first. M. Goefle believes that we shall find here decisive proofs of your rights, and you cannot testify in your own cause. Besides, beware! These proofs may be of a character to make you shrink back with horror."

"I will support the sight of them," replied Christian, made desperate by this thought, which was already his own. "I wish to know the truth, even if it should crush me. Go first, Osmund, it is your right; but I follow you; it is my duty."

"No!" cried M. Goefle, who, together with the danneman and the lieutenant, had rapidly ascended the staircase behind the major, and who threw himself resolutely before the door. "You shall not pass, Christian! You shall not enter without my permission. You are violent, but I am obstinate. Will you lay your hand upon me?"

Christian drew back, vanquished. The major entered with M. Goefle; the lieutenant and the danneman remained on the threshold, between them and Christian.

The major took a few steps into this mysterious chamber, which was scarcely lighted at all by the glimmering of the candle brought by M. Goefle. It was a large room, finished with heavy wood-work, like the bear-room, but entirely empty, dilapidated, and a hundred times more lugubrious than that apartment. Suddenly the major drew back and lowered his voice, so as not to be heard by Christian, who was standing so near the entrance.

"Look!" he said to M. Goefle; "look there, on the floor!"

"It is true, then," replied M. Goefle, in the same tone; "this, indeed, is horrible! Go on, major! courage! We must know all."

They approached a human form, which was lying at the end of the room, the body bent forward and apparently kneeling, the head leaning against the wainscot, as far as they could judge; for it was almost entirely concealed by the black and dusty veil with which the whole form was enveloped.

"It is she! it is the phantom I beheld!" said M. Goefle, recognizing under this veil the gray robe, with

its soiled and trailing ribbons. "It is the Baroness Hilda, dead, or a prisoner."

"It is a living person," said the major, as he raised the veil with a hand trembling with emotion; "but it is not the Baroness Hilda. This is a woman whom I know. Come here, Joë Boëtsoi! Come in, Christian. There is nothing here that you need fear to behold. It is only poor Karine, swooning or asleep."

"No, no," said the danneman, approaching his sister softly; "she is not asleep, she is not fainting; she is saying her prayers, and her soul is in heaven. Do not touch her, do not speak to her until she rises."

"But how did she get here?" said M. Goefle.

"Oh, as to that," replied the danneman, "it is a gift she has to go wherever she wishes, and to enter, like the bird of the night, through the cracks of old walls. She goes, without a thought, into places where I have sometimes followed her, recommending my soul to God. For that reason, I am never uneasy when she disappears from the house; I know that there is a *virtue* in her, and that she cannot fall. But see, she has finished praying within herself! she rises; she is going towards the door. She takes her keys from her belt. Those are keys which she has always kept like relics, and we did not know where they came from —"

"Watch her," said M. Goefle, "since she does not seem either to see or hear us. What is she doing now?"

"Oh," said the danneman, "that is a habit that she has, of trying to find a door when she comes up to certain walls. See, she rests the key upon it, and turns it, then she sees that she is mistaken, and goes further on."

"Ah," said M. Goefle, "that accounts for the little circles traced on the wall in the bear-room."

"Can I speak to her?" said Christian, who had approached Karine.

"You can," replied the danneman; "she will answer you, if your voice pleases her."

"Karine Boëtsoi," said Christian, "what are you looking for here?"

"Do not call me Karine Boëtsoi," she replied; "Ka-

rine is dead. I am the *vala* of ancient days,—she who must not be named!”

“Where do you wish to go?”

“To the bear-room. Have they walled up the door already?”

“No,” said Christian, “I will lead you there. Will you give me your hand?”

“Go on,” said Karine, “I will follow you.”

“Do you see me, then?”

“What should prevent me from seeing you? Are we not in the land of the dead? Are not you poor Baron Adelstan? You have come to ask me for the mother of your child. I have just been praying for her and for him. And now—come, come, I will tell you all!”

And Karine, who seemed suddenly to recognize where she was, passed through the door, and went down the staircase into the bear-room, where Margaret and Martina were terribly frightened by her appearance, although young Olof, who had gone up to the door, and heard all that was going on, had assured them that they had nothing to fear from the poor seeress.

“Do not be afraid of her,” said Christian, who was following Karine a little in advance of the two officers, M. Goefle, and the danneman, and who paused, when she did, near the young ladies: “watch all her movements; and try, as I am doing, to guess what she is dreaming about. Does she not seem to be rendering the last duties to a person who has just died?”

“Yes,” replied Margaret, “she closes their eyes, she kisses their hands, and crosses them upon their breast. And now she weaves an imaginary crown, and places it upon their head. Stay, she is looking for some one—”

“Are you looking for me, Karine?” said Christian to the seeress.

“Are you Adelstan, the good iarl?” replied Karine. “Ah well, listen, and behold: you see that your well beloved has ceased to suffer! She has gone to the land of the elfs. The wicked iarl said: ‘She shall die here,’ and she is dead; but he said also: ‘If a son is born to her, it shall die first.’ But he counted without Karine. Karine

was there ; she received the child, she saved it, she gave it to the fairies of the lake, and the Snow Man never knew that it was born. And Karine has never told her secret, even in fever and in grief ! She speaks now, because the belfry of the chateau is ringing for the dead. Do you not hear it ? ”

“ Can it be true ? ” cried the major, opening the window in all haste : “ no, I do not hear anything. She is dreaming. ”

“ If it is not ringing, it will not delay long, ” replied the danneman. “ Already, this morning, she heard it, from our mountain. We knew that it could not be ; but we knew also that she hears in advance, as she sees in advance, the things that are to be. ”

Karine, feeling the air from the window, approached.

“ It was here, ” she said, “ it was to this window that Karine Bøtsoi brought the child, so that it should fly away. ”

And she began to sing the refrain of the ballad that Christian had heard in the fog.

“ The child of the lake, more beautiful than the star of the evening — ”

“ Is that a song that your mistress taught you ? ” asked M. Goefle.

But Karine did not seem to hear any voice but Christian’s.

Martina Akerstrom replied for her :

“ Yes, yes, ” she said, “ I know that ballad perfectly well : it was composed by the Baroness Hilda. My father found it among the papers that were seized at Stollborg, and left at our house by his predecessor. There were also several Scandinavian poems, which the poor lady had translated into verse and set to music, for she was a very skilful musician ; a real artist, indeed. That was one of the things they brought against her to prove that she worshipped pagan gods. My father blamed the former minister very much for his conduct, and he has carefully preserved these precious manuscripts. ”

“ Now, Karine, ” said M. Goefle to the seeress, who

had fallen into a sort of quiet ecstasy, "have you nothing more to say?"

"Leave me," answered Karine, who had entered into another phase of her trance; "leave me! I must go to the hogar, to meet him who is to return."

"Who told you so?" inquired Christian.

"The stork who perches on the roof-top, and who bears to mothers, seated under the chimney-corner, news of their absent sons. That is why I put on the dress that my well-beloved gave me, so that he might at least see something of his mother. For three days I have been waiting for him, I have been singing to him to draw him hither; but at last he has come,—I feel him near me. Bring bluebells, bring violets, and call old Stenson, so that he may rejoice before he dies. Poor Stenson!"

"Why do you say *poor Stenson*?" cried Christian, terrified. "Do you see him in your vision?"

"Leave me," replied Karine; "I have said,—now the *vala* sinks again into the night."

Karine closed her eyes and tottered.

"That means that she wishes to sleep now," said the danneman, receiving her in his arms. "I will seat her here, for she must sleep wherever she may be."

"No, no," said Margaret, "we will lead her into the other room, where there is a large sofa. Poor woman, she is burning with fever and exhausted with fatigue. Come!"

"But what was she doing overhead?" said M. Goeffe, returning to the staircase and addressing the major, while the two young girls conducted the family of the danneman into the guard-room. "Nothing will get it out of my head that we shall find in this room, walled up by Stenson with so much care, some secret even more important, some proof even more unanswerable than the memories of Karine, and the declaration of Stenson. Come, Christian, we must absolutely—but where are you then?"

"Christian?" cried Margaret, returning hastily from the guard-room; "he is not with us. Where is he?"

"He has already gone up above," said the major, running up the wooden staircase.

"Damnation!" cried M. Goeffe, who ascended with Osmund into the walled-up room; "he has gone! He has slipped through this crack like an adder. Is not that he running along the wall? Christian! —"

"Not a word," said the major. "He is running along the edge of an abyss! Do not startle him. Now—I can no longer see him; he is lost in the fog. I should like to follow him, but I am larger than he. I could never pass through there."

"Listen!" rejoined M. Goeffe. "He has jumped down! — He is speaking! — Listen! —"

Christian's voice was distinctly audible in the silence of the night; he was saying to the soldiers:

"It is I! It is I! The major sends me to the chateau."

"Ah! the foolhardy, the brave boy!" cried M. Goeffe. "He takes counsel only with his own heart. He has gone all alone to face his enemies, and deliver Stenson."

In fact, Christian had flown away, to use the danneman's expression, like the bird of the night, through the crack of an old wall. The name of Stenson, pronounced by Karine, had pierced his heart.

"That he may rejoice before he dies!" she had said, as her prophetic vision passed away.

And would he indeed be doomed to die under the blows of his executioners? Were those heart-rending words one of the cruel, mocking delusions with which hope inspires us?

Christian was imprisoned, and his efforts paralyzed by the prudence of the major. A quarrel between them on this subject was imminent, and although he knew the danger of attempting to escape through the crumbling wall of the old tower, he preferred running this risk to measuring his strength with one of the excellent friends that Providence had sent him. When he had before seen this accidental opening in the wall, he was too far away, and too much preoccupied, to observe it closely. The fog

was slowly dissipating, but the light was still vague and dim. However, Karine had passed through it.

"My God!" he said, "let my devotion inspire me with the supernatural faculties which we sometimes see exerted in delirium."

Knowing well that skill and caution would be of no use now, since he could not see two steps before him, the child of the lake, trusting to the continual miracle of his destiny, ran swiftly down a path by which he had not ventured to ascend during the day.

XIX.

CHRISTIAN reached the manor of Waldemora before the major, who set out at once to join him, but who had to put himself at the head of his little troop, and to give them orders, had succeeded in making more than half the distance. He found the doors of the courts open, and the whole place brilliantly illuminated, as usual during the festivities. There was a great deal of bustle and confusion on the staircase, but of an unusual kind. No more beautiful ladies elegantly dressed, no more handsome gentlemen with powdered hair, were now to be seen, moving gayly to and fro to the sound of Rameau's music, and exchanging, as they met, stately bows or gracious smiles. In their place were busy servants carrying trunks, and making all haste to load sleighs. Almost all the visitors at the chateau were preparing to depart. Some were whispering in low voices in the corridors, while others had shut themselves up in their rooms to take a few hours' repose, after giving orders for the journey.

What was occurring? Every one was so agitated, that Christian, booted, with his head bare, his coat torn and stained with blood, and his hunting-knife in his belt, was scarcely noticed. The servants made way for him instinctively, without asking themselves who was this belated hunter, taking them by storm in this way, and seeming resolved to knock them all down rather than be kept waiting a single second.

Christian accordingly crossed the hunting-gallery, where a number of persons, with faces strangely agitated, were wandering restlessly about. Among them he recognized several who had been pointed out to him at the ball as the baron's *presumptuous* heirs. They seemed very much excited, were whispering together, and anxiously watching a certain door, as if expecting every instant to see it thrown open by the bearer of some important intelligence.

Without giving them time to observe him closely, or to understand what he was doing, Christian crossed this door, which he concluded would lead to the baron's apartments; but, as he was passing through quite a long corridor, he heard horrible groans. He hurried on in the direction from which they came, and, entering an open door, found himself in the presence of Stangstadius, who was sitting quietly reading a paper by a little lamp with a shade, and who did not seem in the least disturbed by the fearful lamentations which could be heard in this room even more distinctly than in the corridor.

"What is that?" said Christian, seizing him by the arm. "Is it here that they torture people?"

Christian's appearance was certainly rather formidable, especially as he had laid his hand upon his knife. The illustrious geologist started up in great terror, crying:

"What is the matter? Whom do you want? Whom are you speaking of?"

"The baron's apartment?" said the young man laconically, and with such a tone of authority that even Stangstadius did not venture to discuss the matter further.

"That way!" he said, pointing to the left. Having thus replied, he returned to his reading, very glad to see Christian withdraw, and saying to himself that the baron had strange bandits in his service, and that you met people in his rooms whom you would not care to encounter in the middle of a wood.

Christian crossed another room, and came to a door that was fastened. He forced it open with one violent thrust. He felt, at that moment, as if he could have broken down the gates of hell.

A gloomy spectacle was presented to his view. The

baron, in frightful convulsions, was struggling in the agony of death ; around him stood Johan, Jacob, the physician, and Pastor Akerstrom, and it was all these four persons could do to keep him from throwing himself out of his bed, and rolling on the floor. They were so entirely absorbed by the patient, who was in a terrible crisis of pain, that they did not hear Christian come in, notwithstanding the noise he made, and did not know of his presence until the dying man, whose face was turned towards him, cried, with an accent of anguish and terror impossible to describe :

“ There he is — there he is — there — my brother ! ”

At the same instant his mouth contracted, his teeth clenched, cutting his tongue, from which the blood spurted. He threw himself back so suddenly and violently, that he escaped from the hands that were trying to hold him, and, with his head thrown back, fell with a terrible crash against the wall of his alcove. He was dead !

While the minister, the physician, and honest Jacob, all of them pale with terror, exchanged the solemn words, “ *All is over !* ” Johan, who, during the whole scene, had preserved the most astonishing presence of mind, looked at Christian and recognized him. For the last hour he had been impatiently waiting to learn the result of the attempt at Stollborg, but had not been able to quit the dying man for a single instant. Christian’s presence showed him that it had failed. Johan felt that he was lost. His only safety was in flight, even if he should return at a later day to submit to the new master of Waldemora, or to try and make away with him, with the assistance of the accomplices upon whom he could still rely. Whatever he might determine hereafter, he only thought now of escaping, but this was no longer possible. Christian was pressing too hard upon him ; at the threshold of the door he seized him by the collar, and with such a vigorous grasp, that the wretch, pale and suffocated, fell upon his knees, imploring pardon.

“ Stenson ! ” said Christian. “ What have you done with Stenson ? ”

“ Who are you, monsieur, and what are you doing ? ”

cried the minister, in a severe tone. "Is this a time, at this solemn moment, and in the presence of a man whose soul is even now appearing before the supreme tribunal, to commit deeds of violence?"

While the minister was speaking, Jacob was trying to disengage Johan from Christian's grasp; but the young man's fearful excitement had increased his strength tenfold, and it would have required more than the combined strength of the three persons present to force him to release his prize.

At the sound of the tumult Stangstadius rushed in, leaving the passage free to the heirs, resolved to be satisfied as to the baron's real condition, and to the servants, who had been on the watch, and who hurried in, to hear the dying man's last groan.

"Who are you, monsieur?" repeated the minister, by whom Christian had allowed himself voluntarily to be disarmed, but without releasing his prey.

"I am Christian Goeffe," he replied, as well from compassion for the poor heirs, as because he felt the necessity of being prudent in their company; "I come on the part of M. Goeffe, my relative and my friend, to demand old Adam Stenson, whom this wretch has perhaps assassinated."

"Assassinated?" cried the minister, shrinking back in terror.

"Oh, he is quite capable of it!" cried the heirs, who were crowding in, and who hated Johan.

Without paying any further attention to the incident, they crowded around the *dear deceased*, stifling the poor physician with their numbers, assailing him with eager questions, and feasting their eyes upon the spectacle of the baron's hideously disfigured face, which still terrified them, in spite of their joy.

However, they moved aside with some deference to admit the impassible Stangstadius, who came with a glass to make the final test, while declaring right and left that the doctor was an ass, who could not tell whether a man was dead or not. If Christian had not been so busy with his own affairs, he would have heard several voices ex-

claim, "Is there no hope?" in a tone that signified clearly enough, "Heaven grant that he is really dead!" But Christian had no thought to bestow upon his inheritance; he wanted to see Stenson, and he demanded that Johan should produce him immediately, or should conduct him himself into the old man's presence.

"Let the man go," said the minister; "you are strangling him. He is not in a condition to answer you."

"I am not strangling him at all," replied Christian, who, in fact, had taken great pains not to to endanger the fellow's life, since he was in possession of important secrets which he wished to discover.

Meanwhile, the cunning Johan took advantage of M. Akerstrom's kindness. Unwilling to reply, he pretended to faint. The minister blamed Christian for his brutality; and the servants, who one and all felt very uneasy about their own fate if the redressers of wrongs should begin their office, seemed much more inclined to defend their comrade than to submit to the authority of an unknown.

When a sufficient number of Johan's adherents had gathered around him to enable him to resume his audacity, he quickly recovered his consciousness, and cried out in a resounding voice, that was heard above the tumult of the apartment:

"Monsieur Minister, I denounce an intriguant and an impostor, who has come here with an infernal forged romance to pass himself off as the only heir of the barony. You hate me!" he added, addressing the heirs; "very good! give me up to his vengeance; and now that the master is dead, you will no longer have any one to baffle the infamous machinations of M. Goefle; for he it is who has brought forward this *chevalier d'industrie*, and who boasts that he will make his rights prevail over all of yours."

If a thunderbolt had fallen upon them it could not have produced greater terror and consternation in the persons present, than Johan's words; but, as he had anticipated, this first stupor was followed by a sudden reaction. Christian tried to speak—for the physician

called upon him to justify or to explain himself—but his voice was drowned in a chorus of insults and maledictions.

“Drive him out! drive him out ignominiously!” cried the cousins and nephews of the deceased.

“No no!” cried Johan, supported by his accomplices, who understood perfectly well that the day of revelations had come, and that it was necessary to reduce the avengers to silence. “Make him a prisoner! To the tower with him! To the tower!”

“Yes, yes, to the tower with him!” bellowed the Baron de Lindenwald, who was perhaps the keenest in the hunt, and the most rapacious of all the heirs.

“No, kill him!” cried Johan, venturing everything to gain his end.

“Yes, kill him! throw him out of the window!” echoed the infuriated group, frenzied by their diabolical passions.

The chamber of the dead man had become the theatre of a tumultuous and scandalous scene. The servants rushed upon Christian, who could not defend himself, since the minister, with the best intentions in the world, had thrown himself before him, declaring that he would lose his own life rather than see a murder accomplished in his presence.

The physician, Jacob, and two of the heirs, an old man and his young son, placed themselves also by Christian’s side, out of respect for the minister, and from their natural honor and good feeling. Stangstadius, hoping to calm the passions of the incensed assailants by the authority of his name and his eloquence, threw himself between them and this little group; but they took no notice of him, and crowded against Christian with such force that the young man, more impeded than assisted by his feeble champions, was pushed steadily, step by step, towards the window, which Johan had just thrown open. This wretch, with his eye on fire and mouth foaming with rage, never stopped for a single instant vociferating threats and denunciations, so as to prevent the terror and madness of his party from growing cold.

As they looked upon this frightful man, who threw off,

at last, his mask of hypocritical mildness, and showed the tiger beneath, with all his bloodthirsty instincts. The minister and physician were struck with terror. Faint and trembling, they recoiled, or rather fell back upon Christian, while two of the most determined blackguards among the servants seized him adroitly by the legs, for the purpose of lifting him up and throwing him out backwards. All would have been over with him in another moment, when Major Larrison, the lieutenant, the corporal, M. Goeffe, and the four soldiers, rushed into the room.

"Obey the law!" cried the major, going up to Johan. "In the name of the king, I arrest you."

Handing him over to Corporal Duff, he added, addressing the lieutenant:

"Allow no one to leave the room!"

No one ventured to dispute the authority of an officer of the indelta, and amid the silence that followed, occasioned both by fear and respect, Larrison gazed around him, and saw the baron, motionless, upon his bed. He approached, looked at him attentively, and took off his hat, saying:

"Death is the messenger of God!"

Then he replaced it upon his head, as he added:

"May God pardon the Baron de Waldemora!"

Several voices were now raised to implore the major's assistance in putting down intriguants and impostors; but he ordered all to be silent, declaring that the first explanation of the strange scene he had discovered on entering, must be made by the minister.

"Would it not be more suitable," rejoined the minister, "to listen to this explanation in another apartment?"

"Yes," said the major, "out of respect to the dead, we will go into the baron's cabinet. Corporal, see that the persons present pass out in single file, and that no one remains, or leaves the room by any other door. Monsieur Minister, will you be so good as to pass first, with Doctor Stangstadius and the baron's physician?"

Christian pointed out the old Count de Nora and his son, who had tried so loyally to defend him, and the

major allowed them to pass freely, and, when questioning them in their turn, showed them the greatest respect.

The examination of facts was very minute; but, as soon as it was completed, the major lost no time in complying with the wish of the impatient Christian, and of M. Goefle. He ordered, at once, that old Stenson should be delivered from the tower, where Jacob declared that he had been grieved to see him conducted an hour before. Christian would have gone to him immediately, but the major forbade this, and, without giving any explanation of his conduct, ordered that Stenson should be immediately taken back to Stollborg, and reinstated in his residence with all possible respect, but without being allowed to communicate with any human being. Whoever should violate these instructions was threatened with the severest penalties. He then ordered Johan and four lackeys, who, the minister declared, had attempted Christian's life, to be taken to prison in Stenson's place. Those who had been contented with insulting him, and who hastened to deny the fact, were reprimanded, and threatened with being handed over to justice in case the offence should be repeated.

There was no danger of that. In spite of the small number of men with the major at this moment, every one felt that he had the law and right upon his side, as well as courage and determination. They took it for granted, also, from his bearing, that he had sent word to his company, and that at any moment the *indelta* might be represented in force at the chateau.

In the absence of any other magistrate, for the deceased chatelain, in virtue of his privileges, had assumed entire control in the canton, and, for the present, was left without a successor, the major called upon the minister of the parish, and M. Goefle, to assist him: the one as possessing both civil authority and moral influence, and the other as a legal adviser. He had all the keys brought, and intrusted them to Jacob, whom he appointed major-domo and guardian of the chateau, assigning to him the special assistance of two soldiers, so that he might oblige the other servants to respect his authority in case of

necessity. He intrusted the care of superintending the baron's obsequies to the physician, and declared that he would now immediately proceed, with the minister, M. Goefle, the lieutenant, and four witnesses to be appointed by the heirs, to look for a will, although Johan had declared that the baron had made no will.

The heirs, who were very much alarmed and irritated at first, became more tranquil when they saw that neither the major, nor M. Goefle, nor Christian, referred to a new competitor. There were about a dozen of them, all very badly disposed towards each other, although they had necessarily been very closely associated, since they had been equally eager to pay court to the baron, and exert a strict surveillance over the common prey. The old Count de Nora, the poorest of them all, was the only one who had preserved his dignity with his relatives, and his integrity in his relations with the baron.

No will which the baron could have made would have affected Christian's rights. M. Goefle's expressive looks, and a few whispered words, gave Christian to understand that they were instituting this search merely to quiet the rapacious band of heirs, and gain time until they were ready to act openly. Christian comprehended also, from the expressive silence of his friends about him, that the time had not come to make himself known, and that, for the moment, his rightful claims, and the accusations brought against him by Johan, were to be equally ignored.

The heirs, as may be supposed, had accepted this situation joyfully. Their fears were quite allayed by M. Goefle's apparent indifference — which they regarded as a practical denial of Johan's assertions — and by the air of perfect security which Christian very naturally assumed from the moment that he was satisfied as to Stenson's fate. Christian seconded still further the wishes of his friends by declining to accompany them in their search for the will; and as his presence was no longer required in the cabinet, the examination being over, he went into the hunting-gallery, and soon forgot everything except his anxiety to find out what had happened to Margaret.

Suddenly he saw Countess Elveda coming into the gallery.

She recognized him while still at a distance, and came to meet him.

"Ah, ah!" she said gayly; "you have not gone, then, or you have returned, Monsieur Phantom? And in what a costume, to be sure! Have you just come from hunting in the middle of the night?"

"Exactly, madame," replied Christian, who saw, from the cheerfulness of Margaret's aunt, how little she knew or cared about her niece's escapade. "I have been hunting bears a long way off, and have returned only to hear of the event—"

"Oh yes! the baron's death!" said the countess, lightly. "It is all over, I trust, and one can venture to breathe again. I have been very unfortunate, for my part! From my rooms, you could hear all his dying groans. I was obliged to take refuge with Olga, and that young person entertained me with a different sort of music. That poor girl is very nervous, and when I informed her that instead of seeing the marionettes we should be obliged either to start for our homes in the fog, or to remain in the house of a dying man until he would be good enough to give up the ghost, she fell into frightful convulsions. Those Russians are so superstitious! At last we are quiet again, but I am going to take my departure at once, notwithstanding, for I hear they are going to ring a great bell, which is only rung at the death or birth of the seigneurs of the domain. I shall make my escape, therefore, for it will be impossible to sleep, and that bell tolling for the dead would make me desperately gloomy. Isn't that it now?"

"I think it is," replied Christian; "but don't you intend to take the countess with you—your niece?"

He added, with the most perfect apparent frankness and simplicity:

"I am really very stupid to be unable to recall her name."

"You are very artful!" replied the countess, laughing. "You must have been courting her the other eve-

ning, since you challenged the baron for her sake. Ah well, I am not at all shocked! such things belong to your age; and, after all, I was by no means displeased by your boldness in defying the baron, who was a very wicked man. You have good qualities — I am a judge — and I see now how unsuited to your character were the lessons in diplomacy and prudence that I gave you at our first meeting. You are in a different road; for there are two ways that lead to success — skill and courage. Good! you perhaps have chosen the shortest, that of the wrong-headed and audacious. You must go to Russia, my dear. You are handsome and bold. I have spoken to the ambassador about you, and he has plans for you. Do you understand me?"

"Not the least in the world, madame."

"Oh, it is plain enough! Orloff cannot remain in favor forever, and there are certain interests that may come into conflict with his — you understand now? So, then, don't think of my niece, for you can aspire to a more brilliant fortune; and as, for the moment, you are nothing, not even M. Goefle's nephew, for he refuses to acknowledge you even for an illegitimate child, I warn you that I will have the door shut in your face if you come to my house with the foolish notion of pleasing Margaret. On the other hand, I shall expect to see you in Stockholm so as to present you to the ambassador, who will take you into his service. Au revoir, then! — or stay — I will take you with me!"

"Really?"

"Certainly I will. I can do so without the least inconvenience, since I am going to leave my niece here. Frightened by the groans of the dying man, she has gone to pass the night at the parsonage, with her friend Mademoiselle Akerstrom; or at least that is what her governess pretends. It doesn't matter; wherever the little coward has taken refuge, Mademoiselle Potin is to take her back to Dalby to-morrow, under the charge of Peterson, an old family servant. M. Stangstadius has promised me, also, to accompany them. The child will be heart-broken, for she flatters herself that she is coming with

me to Stockholm; but she is still too young: she will do nothing but commit blunders in society. Her *débüt* is put off until next year."

"So," said Christian, "she must pass still another year all alone in her old manor?"

"Ah, I see that she has been confiding her sorrows to you. It is a very touching story, and it is to save you from being afflicted with it that I shall carry you off in my sleigh. Stay, I will give you an hour to get ready, and will come for you in this gallery. Is it agreed?"

"I am not at all sure," replied Christian, boldly. "I warn you that I am very much in love with your niece."

"Well, so much the better, if it lasts!" resumed the countess. "When you have passed several years in Russia, and have won sufficient roubles, and peasants, and estates, I will not say no, if you persist."

The countess withdrew, persuaded that Christian would be punctual at the rendezvous.

She had no sooner disappeared than Mademoiselle Potin, who had been watching them, slipped up to Christian to remonstrate with him severely. She had been very anxious about Margaret, and had sought her everywhere.

"Luckily," added the governess, "she has just come in with her friend Martina, whose mother, supposing her detained in our apartment, was not uneasy about her; but it troubles me to have to tell so many falsehoods to conceal Margaret's imprudences, and I declare to you that I will reveal everything to the countess, unless you give me your word of honor that you will leave the chateau and the country immediately."

Christian comforted good Mademoiselle Potin by assuring her that she should have no further cause of displeasure; and, well knowing how impossible it would be to comply with her wishes, he waited what was next to occur.

At one o'clock in the morning the major's company arrived, silently, and with despatch. Information of the fact was given to him, and he declared the search for the will at an end. They had found nothing, to the great

satisfaction of most of the heirs, who preferred trusting to their legal claims rather than to the doubtful benevolence of the deceased.

"Now, gentlemen," said the major, "I must beg you to follow me to Stollborg, where I have reason to believe that a will has been confided to M. Stenson."

They all rushed eagerly to the door of the room, but he detained them.

"Permit me," he said; "under the present circumstances, a very grave responsibility rests upon the minister, upon M. Goefle, and myself, and I must proceed with great rigor, according to the duties of my office, to call together as large a number of responsible witnesses as can be found, and to see that all things are conducted in an orderly and satisfactory manner. Be so good as to accompany me to the hunting-gallery, where the other witnesses ought by this time to be assembled."

In fact, in accordance with the major's orders, all the guests at the new chateau had been requested to adjourn to the hunting-gallery. This virtual command was very annoying to many of them, who were already all prepared for their departure, but the indelta spoke in the name of the law, and they submitted.

Countess Elveda, eager to get off, and always very active, was the first to appear. She found Christian asleep on the sofa.

"What!" she cried, "is that your way of making ready for a journey!—And what are you doing here?" she added, addressing Margaret, who came in with her governess.

"I am sure I don't know," replied Margaret, "I am obeying a general order."

Soon after Olga arrived, and then followed the minister's family. M. Stangstadius, the ambassador and his suite, in a word, all the guests assembled at Waldemora, and most of them in very ill-humor at having been detained at the very moment of starting, or else at having been aroused from their sleep. They grumbled bitterly, and railed against the gloomy bell, which might have been let alone, they said, until every one had gone.

"But what is the matter? What do they want with us?" cried the dowagers. "Has the baron given orders that we are to keep on dancing here after his death, or are we condemned to see him laid out on his bed of state? For my part, I had rather be excused. How do you feel?"

"Who is that young man who has just gone out?" said the ambassador to Countess Elveda. "Is it not our young adventurer?"

"Yes, that is our adventurer," she answered; "some one just handed him a note. It seems that the order by which we are detained does not apply to him."

In fact, Christian had received a few lines from M. Goefle to the following effect:

"Return to Stollborg, and dress yourself quickly in the costume that you wore at the ball last evening. Wait for us in the bear-room. Clear up the rubbish on the staircase, and conceal the breach in the wall with the maps."

Tea and coffee were served to the company in the hunting-gallery, and, in about a quarter of an hour, all the persons designated by the major and the minister, together with the baron's heirs, and a large number of the servants and principal vassals of the domain, proceeded to Stollborg, where Christian, suitably attired, did the honors of the bear-room, with the help of Nils, the dannemans, father and son, and Ulphilas, who had been set at liberty after a few hours' imprisonment. We may as well say, in passing, that Ulphilas never knew why this punishment had been inflicted upon him by M. Johan; he never understood, either before, or during, or after the occurrence of the events we have narrated, the drama enacted in Stollborg.

XX.

WHEN the company was assembled, the major laid before them all the particulars of the scheme for Christian's assassination. The prisoners were summoned

to appear, and comprehending that their cause was lost, in consequence of Johan's imprisonment and the baron's death, they defended themselves so poorly, that their denials were equivalent to a confession. Puffo acknowledged frankly that he had been commissioned to put the gold goblet in his master's baggage, and that M. Johan had paid him to do it.

"At present," said the avaricious and haughty Baron de Lindenwald, who was the nearest cousin of the deceased, "we are quite willing to sign a formal report, declaring the truth of the accusations brought against M. Johau; but on condition that we are excused from judging the conduct and intentions of the baron, his master. There is something barbarous and impious in making these investigations for the purpose of bringing a suit against a man who has not yet been laid in the tomb, and who, stretched upon his death-bed, cannot reply to any accusations. In my opinion, gentlemen, it is too late, or too soon, for such measures, and we ought to refuse to hear anything more. What, to us, is the individual who is taking all these precautions to satisfy his vengeance against servants, for whom nobody cares, and the memory of a man of whom we can each of us entertain his own opinion, without, I trust, being called upon to revile him in public? We were told about a will, of which nothing more is said; and as it is easy to see that we have been intentionally deceived in this matter, I, for one, am resolved to withdraw, and no longer to submit to the authority usurped by a petty officer of the indelta. I am not the only one here whose privileges are disregarded at the present moment; and when such things happen, you know as well as I do, gentlemen, what is the right thing to do."

While speaking, the Baron de Lindenwald laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword; and as the other heirs followed his example, a fight seemed inevitable, when the minister, with much vigor of speech and ecclesiastical dignity, interposed, calling earnestly upon all disinterested and honest persons to lend him their support. Almost every one present responded to his appeal, and by their

bearing and remarks condemned the baron's attempt so unequivocally, that the refractory were obliged to submit, and the major was spared the painful duty of using harsh measures against them.

It was perfectly evident to him, and to all the witnesses of this scene, that the heirs were unwilling to inquire into the causes of the baron's hatred against Christian, because they felt a presentiment of the truth. M. Goeffe had placed him designedly under his father's portrait, and every one had instantly remarked the striking resemblance. But there were no words in the Swedish language bitter and sarcastic enough to express the aversion with which the *presumptuous* were beginning to regard this juggler, whom Johan had denounced, and whom M. Goeffe (whose natural son he was) wished to establish as the baron's heir, by means of an improbable romance and forged proofs.

M. Goeffe remained impassible and smiling. Christian found it difficult to contain himself; but Margaret's tender and supplicating glance enabled him to accomplish this miracle.

"Now," said the minister, when silence was restored, "introduce M. Adam Stenson, who has been kept secluded in his apartment since he was released from prison."

Adam Stenson appeared. He was dressed with care, and his sweet and noble face, worn with fatigue, but still dignified and serene, produced a most favorable impression. M. Goeffe begged him to sit down, and proceeded to read the declaration written by his hand, and confided to Manasses, at Perugia. This document, which had not yet been brought forward, was listened to by some of the company with the greatest surprise and interest, and by others in sullen and gloomy silence.

The Russian ambassador, who had no such views for Christian as the Countess Elveda pretended, perhaps because she was trying to put them into his head, but who felt a genuine interest in the young man, on account of his handsome face and determined manner, began to express his approbation of the way in which this investigation

was conducted, so as to do away with the necessity of a lawsuit, or, if there should be a suit, so as to throw all possible light upon the subject. It ought to be mentioned that Christian's friends had persuaded this dignitary to be present, by urgent solicitations. The respect that M. Goefle took pains to show him, in spite of his prejudices against his policy, flattered the ambassador, who liked to be mixed up in the affairs of private individuals, as well as in public matters, in Sweden.

When the document had been read, the minister turned to Stenson, and asked him whether he could hear the questions that were addressed to him.

"Yes, Monsieur Minister," replied Stenson; "I am very deaf, it is true, but sometimes I recover my hearing almost entirely, and I often hear things to which I do not wish to reply."

"Will you answer to-day?"

"Yes, monsieur, I wish to do so."

"Do you recognize your writing in this document?"

"Yes, monsieur, perfectly."

"The reasons of your long silence are indicated in it," resumed the minister; "but before being accepted as true, they must be more clearly explained. The manner in which the baron has treated you up to the present time does not seem compatible either with the fear with which you have regarded him, or with the terrible designs upon other persons attributed to him in this declaration."

Stenson's only answer was to lift up the sleeve of his coat. Every one could see, upon his thin and trembling arms, the marks of the cords that had been tied so tightly about his wrists as to draw blood.

"See," he said, "with what sort of sport the baron was amusing himself, when the agony of death closed his eyes, and terminated my torture; but I did not acknowledge anything. They might have broken my old bones! I would not have said a word. What is it to die at my age?"

"You shall not die yet, Stenson!" cried M. Goefle; "you shall live to experience a great joy. You can speak freely now; Baron Olaus is no more."

"I know it, monsieur," said Stenson, "since I am here ; but there is no more happiness for me in this world, for he whom I saved has perished !"

"Are you quite sure of that, Stenson?" said Monsieur Goeffle.

Stenson looked through the room, which was very brilliantly lighted. He fixed his eyes upon Christian, who repressed every sign of emotion, so as to avoid attracting his attention in any way, and who even pretended not to see him, although he was burning to throw himself into his arms.

"Well!" said M. Goeffle to the old man, "what is the matter, Stenson? Why do you weep?"

"Because I fear that I am dreaming," said Stenson, "because I believed I was dreaming two days ago, when I saw him here ; because I do not know him any longer, and yet I recognize him."

"Remain where you are, M. Stenson," said the minister to the old man, who wanted to go up to Christian ; "a resemblance, however striking, is not a sure indication, for it may be the result of chance." The facts advanced by you in the document that has just been read must be established."

"That can easily be done," said Stenson. "M. Goeffle has only to read the paper which I confided to him yesterday. The identity between Christian Goffredi and Christian de Waldemora can then be established by means of the letters from Manasses, which I also placed in his hands this very day."

"I took a solemn oath," said M. Goeffle, "not to open this paper until after the baron's death. I opened it two hours ago, and these are the few words that it contains :

"Examine the wall behind the portrait of Baroness Hilda, at Stollborg, to the right of the window of the bear-room."

"Ah ! ah !" whispered the major to M. Goeffle, while the minister caused the portrait to be taken down, and proceeded, under Stenson's direction, to open the secret aperture behind it ; "I had supposed that the proof would be found in the walled-up room."

“No, God be praised!” replied the lawyer, in the same tone; “for it would have been seen, in that case, that we had been there beforehand, and we might have been accused of having placed false proofs there ourselves. Now, thanks to the great maps that have been put back into their places, no one here has heeded or remarked the breach in the wall. It was because I looked into Stenson’s mysterious warning at the new chateau, that I advised you to bring a great many witnesses here without fear.”

When the hiding-place had been opened, the minister took out, with his own hands, a metal casket, in which was found a decisive document, which he read aloud.

This document had been written by the Baroness Hilda, and was a clear and detailed account of the sad days that she had passed at Stollborg in the custody of the odious Johan, and of the persecutions that she had undergone, together with her faithful friends and servants, Adam Stenson and Karine Bœtsoi.

The unhappy widow declared, and took her oath “upon her eternal salvation, and upon the soul of her husband and of her first child, both of them assassinated by the order of a man whom she did not wish to name, but whose crimes would some day be known,” that she had given birth to a second son, fruit of her legitimate union with the Baron Adelstan de Waldemora, on the eighteenth of September, 1746, at two o’clock in the morning, in the bear-room, at Stollborg. She related, in a manner at the same time modest and dramatic, with what courage she had repressed her cries, so that the suspicions of the jailers, who were installed close by her in the chamber called the guard-room, should not be aroused. Karine had assisted her in her time of trial, and had sung constantly, to keep the feeble wailing of the new-born infant from being heard. Stenson did not quit the room during the birth of the child, and immediately afterwards he had tried to carry it off by the secret door, but the existence of this door had become known to the jailers, and, to his dismay, he had found it fastened on the outside, and guarded. On the failure of his first attempt, Stenson

made some excuse for going out — it was not thought necessary to keep him a prisoner, but he was always strictly searched whenever he left the tower — and went in search of a boat, which, under cover of the darkness, he succeeded in introducing into the passages between the rocks and boulders of the lake, when Karine, who had prepared a basket and cord for the purpose, let down the child to him from the window. All this took some time, and day was beginning to appear. The window of the guard-room opened at the very moment when Stenson received the child into his trembling hands. Fortunately he was protected by the vault of overhanging rocks, and had been able to keep hidden until the men above withdrew, whereupon, with many prayers to God, he had crossed the short space between the lake and the shore — behind the *gaard*.

The romance that Christian had imagined, on exploring this strange site, had therefore reproduced, in some respects, the facts of his own history.

The child had been confided to Anna Bøetsøi, the mother of Karine and Danneman Joë. It had been suckled by a tame doe in one of the chalets of Blaakdal, and every now and then the imprisoned baroness received information about it by means of signal fires lighted on the mountains.

Reassured as to the fate of her child, the baroness hoped to join him and fly into Denmark ; but the baron refused to restore her to liberty, unless she would consent to sign a declaration that her pregnancy had been simulated. This she refused to do, saying that she was willing to admit having fallen into an error, but not to accuse herself of imposture ; whereupon he began to seem strangely suspicious of the event which she had it so much at heart to conceal. Then, trembling lest the birth and retreat of her child should be discovered, and he destroyed, she had signed the document drawn up by Pastor Mickelson.

“But, before God and man,” she said, in this new declaration, “I protest here against my own signature, and take my oath that it was extorted from me by violence and terror. If, under these circumstances, I denied the

truth for the first time in my life, all mothers will understand my fault, and God will pardon me."

Once in possession of this terrible declaration, the baron, fearing, perhaps, a recantation, or the exposure of his crimes, formally refused to restore his victim to freedom, declaring that she was mad; and doing his best to make her so, by a system of harsh captivity, privations, insults and intimidations. Some peasants who were courageous enough to express a sympathy for her, and to try and set her free, he had beaten after the Russian fashion, in the guard-room, where she could hear their cries. Stenson and Karine he threatened with the same treatment if they continued to urge that the baroness should be set at liberty, and these faithful friends had been obliged to feign compliance with his wishes, so as not to be separated from their unfortunate mistress.

At last, suffering and grief did their work upon the poor victim. She sank into a rapid decline, and, feeling that she was soon to die, she wrote out for her son this account of her sorrows; wherein, however, she implored him never to seek revenge, in case circumstances impossible to foresee should make him acquainted with the mystery of his birth before the baron's death. She was convinced that this implacable, rich, and powerful man would pursue her son, if he knew of his existence, in whatever corner of the earth he might be hidden. She prayed, therefore, that he might live a long time "in a humble station, in ignorance of his rights, and that he might rather love the arts or sciences than be ambitious of wealth and power, source of so many evils, and of such cruel passions, on the earth." The poor mother added, notwithstanding, in anticipation of a future discovery, that her son, to whom she had given the name Adelstan-Christian, had, at his birth, black hair, and "fingers made like those of his father and his ancestors." Finally she gave him her supreme benediction, and enjoined upon him to believe implicitly, and to regard as sacred, all the statements of Stenson and Karine — the witnesses of the sufferings of her captivity, and of the constant and unalterable lucidity of her mind.

in spite of the calumnious reports that had been spread abroad as to her pretended state of madness and fury.

"My soul is calm," she said, at the approach of death. "I am prepared to depart, full of resignation, of hope, and confidence, to a better world. I pardon my executioners, and I have only one regret in leaving this sad life — that of abandoning my son; but the unexpected success of his flight has taught me to rely upon Providence, and the devoted friendship of those who have saved him."

The signature was large and firm, as if a last effort of life had warmed the heart of the poor dying woman at this supreme hour. It was dated, "This 15th of December, 1746."

Besides the declaration of the baroness, the casket contained a sort of formal report, drawn up by Stenson, of the last moments and death of his unfortunate mistress. This report, which the minister also read, was dated the twenty-eighth of December of the same year, and was as follows:

"They deprived her of sleep up to her last hour. Johan and his gang, who occupied the guard-room, kept on night and day swearing, yelling, and blaspheming in her very ears, and the baron, her brother-in-law, came every day, under the pretence of seeing that she was well-treated, to tell her that she was mad, and overwhelm her with insults and reproaches, because of the pretended plot which he had defeated. The only plot — and with the help of God it succeeded! — was, by patience and silence, to persuade this persecutor that madame had really been mistaken about her condition, and that he had nothing to fear in the future.

"Upon his side, Pastor Mickelson, not less cruel and importunate, came even to madame's death-bed to tell her that, having lived in a land of papists, she was imbued with false doctrines, and to threaten her a hundred times with hell, instead of giving her the consolations and hopes to which every Christian soul has a right.

"At last he went out, only an hour before she breathed her last, and she expired in our arms, on the fourth day of the Christmas holidays, at four o'clock in the morning, with these words upon her lips:

“‘My God! bestow a mother upon my son!’”

“We testify that she died like a saint, without having had a single moment of anger, of delirium, or even of religious doubt.

“After closing her eyes, we stopped the clock, and blew out the Christmas candle which was burning in the chandelier, with the prayer to God that we might see this clock set in motion, and the candle lighted, by the hand of our future young master.

“After which, we have drawn up this writing which we are going to hide and seal up, together with that of our well-beloved mistress, in the wall of her chamber, in the place which she herself indicated, all things being prepared to that end.

“And, with many tears, we both of us sign our names, swearing that we have certified only to the exact truth.

“ADAM STENSON,

“KARINE BËTSOI.”

The pastor read these simple pages with so much feeling and pathos, that the women wept, and the men, touched and convinced, gave three cheers for Christian de Waldemora, and crowded around him, eager to shake hands with him and to offer him their congratulations. The heirs, however (from this malignant set the old Count de Nora and his son must always be excepted), declared that they should require the appearance of Karine Bëtsoi; having gathered, probably, from the reports in circulation about her, that this woman was still alive, and was mad. They hoped that they could object to her as a witness; and the major also dreaded exceedingly the effect of her appearance, and hastened to say that she was ill, and lived at a considerable distance. He was interrupted by a rough, although kindly voice: that of Danneman Joë Bëtsoi.

“Why do you say what is not so, Monsieur Major?” cried the honest man. “Karine Bëtsoi is neither so ill nor so far away as you suppose. She has had her sleep here, and now that she has rested, her mind is as clear as your own. Do not be afraid to call Karine Bëtsoi. It is true that the poor soul has suffered, above all since the day

when she had to be separated from the child, and that she says things that cannot be understood ; but, for all that, her head is good and her will firm. What proves it is, that nobody has been able to find out her secret, not even myself, who knew the child, and who have just learned his name and history for the first time in my life. Now, a woman who can keep a secret is not like an ordinary woman, and what she says ought to be believed."

Rising, he went to the door of the guard-room, and threw it open.

"Come, my sister!" he said to the seeress; "you are wanted here."

Every one bent forward with eager curiosity as Karine entered. Her pallor, her precocious old age, her look of amazement, and uncertain, faltering step, caused, at first, more pity than sympathy. However, in the sight of them all, she drew herself up erect, and stood firm. Her face assumed an expression of enthusiasm and energy. She had taken off the poor gray dress, that precious rag in which she never allowed herself to sleep, from over her peasant's dress, and her hair, white as snow, was drawn from her face and tied with red woollen cords, giving her somewhat the appearance of an ancient sibyl.

She went up to the pastor, and without waiting to be questioned, said:

"Father and friend of the afflicted, you know Karine Boetsoi; you know that her soul is neither guilty nor deceitful. She asks you why the belfry-bell of the new chateau is tolling; what you say she will believe."

"The belfry-bell is tolling for the dead," replied the minister; "your ears have not deceived you. For a long time, Karine, I have known that you have a secret which oppresses you. You can speak now, and perhaps you can be cured. Baron Olaus is dead!"

"I know it," she said; "the great iarl appeared to me last night. He said: 'I am going away forever,' and I felt my soul reborn. Now I will speak, because the child of the lake is going to return. I saw him, also, in my dream."

"Do not talk about your dreams, Karine," rejoined the minister, "but try and recall what has really happened.

If you wish to recover reason and tranquillity of soul, by the grace of the Lord, make an effort yourself to be humble and submissive; for I have often told you that pride had a great deal to do with your madness: you pretend to read in the future, when you are not able, perhaps, to relate the past."

Karine remained abashed and thoughtful for an instant, and then answered:

"If the good pastor of Waldemora, as kind and as humane as he who preceded him was ferocious and cruel, orders me to tell the past, I will tell the past."

"I both command you and entreat you to do so," said the pastor; "speak calmly, and remember that God weighs each one of your words."

Karine collected her thoughts, and said:

"We are in the room where our well-beloved mistress fell asleep forever."

"Do you mean Hilda de Waldemora?"

"Yes; she is the widow of the good young iarl, and the mother of the child named Christian, who ought now to return to light the Christmas candle on the hearth of his fathers. She gave birth to this child in the full of the moon of *Hæst*,* here, in this bed, where she died in the last days of the moon of *Jul*. She gave him her blessing here, by this window, out of which he flew away, for he was born with wings! And then she told a lie, saying in her heart: 'God pardon me for killing my son by my word! But it is better for him to live among the elfs than among men.' Then she sang to her harp, and when she died, she said: 'May God bestow a mother upon my son!'"

Brought back, in a measure, to a perception of real things, Karine began to weep; then her mind became confused, and the minister, seeing that she could no longer understand the questions that were addressed to her, made a sign to the danneman, who quietly led the poor seeress away, after glancing in triumph at the company, as if to challenge their admiration of the manner in which his sister had answered.

* *Hæst*, September; *Jul*, December.

"What would you have more?" said M. Goefle, glancing around him. "Has not this poor enthusiast told you, in a few words of her rustic poetry, precisely the same things that Stenson has written in this document, with the methodical clearness of his mind? And is not her very frenzy — the sort of continual delirium in which she lives — a proof of what she has suffered for those she so dearly loved?"

The opportunity for pleading was too fine to be lost; M. Goefle could not help taking advantage of it. He spoke with inspiration, summed up the facts of the case rapidly, related portions of Christian's life, after having established his identity by means of Manasses' letters to Stenson, explained the romantic circumstances of the last two days, and indeed succeeded so well in convincing his auditors, that they forgot all about the lateness of the hour and their own fatigue, and asked him question after question, so as to keep him talking. Finally, they all signed an official report of the proceedings.

The Baron de Lindenwald made a last effort to revive the drooping courage of the other heirs.

"No matter," he said, rising, for the doors were open, and any one was free to withdraw, "we shall find out the truth of all these ridiculous fictions: we will go to law!"

"I suppose so," replied M. Goefle, with great animation; "but we shall await you on firm ground."

"For my part, I shall not go to law," said the Count de Nora; "I am convinced, and I shall sign."

"These gentlemen will not go to law either," said the ambassador, pointedly.

"Oh, yes they will," rejoined M. Goefle, "but they will lose."

"We will attack the validity of the marriage," cried the baron; "Hilda de Blixen was a Catholic."

Christian was going to reply angrily, when M. Goefle hastened to interrupt him:

"How do you know that, monsieur?" he said to the baron. "Where are your proofs? Where is this pretended chapel to the Virgin which she is said to have

erected? Now that the mysteries of Stollborg are disclosed to all, what evidence remains of this ridiculous fable, which served as a pretext to several persons here present for abandoning that unhappy woman to persecution and to death?"

"This Christian Goffredi may be a Catholic also; he was brought up in Italy!" muttered the heirs, as they withdrew. "Patience! we will know the truth of it, and will see whether a man who cannot have a seat in the Diet, nor be appointed to any office, is to inherit a domain entitling him to all the privileges of the nobility."

"Be quiet, Christian, hold your tongue!" said M. Goefle, in a low voice, holding Christian back with all his force, as the latter started up to follow his adversaries out and defy them to their faces. "Remain where you are, or all is lost. Be a dissenter, if you choose, when you have inherited; but, for the present, keep quiet about it. No one has remarked that the bear-room has become square again."

"What do you mean?" inquired the major of M. Goefle. "Why should we hesitate to admit every one freely into the upper room, since the pretended chapel does not exist?"

"We could do so," replied M. Goefle, "if we had not already broken into it. As it is, they would accuse us of having removed the evidences of the prohibited worship."

Countess Elveda now approached Christian, and said to him, with her most gracious air:

"At present, baron, I sincerely trust that I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in Stockholm—"

"Will you still consent to receive me," he replied, "only on condition that I am to start for Russia?"

"No," she said, "I leave you free to select her to whom you have given your heart."

"Will Countess Margaret accompany you to Stockholm?" said Christian, in a low voice.

"She may join me, perhaps, when you have gained your lawsuit, if lawsuit there is to be. In the meanwhile, she must return to her chateau. It is all settled, and prudence requires it. For my part, I hold to my

promise, and am still ready to carry you to Stockholm, where you will be obliged to go to have your affairs settled."

"I thank you, madame; but I am entirely under the control of my lawyer, who has further use for me here."

"Au revoir, then!" replied the countess, taking the arm of the ambassador, who said to her, as they went out:

"I am quite as well pleased to have that handsome young baron decline travelling with you!"

Margaret bade adieu to her aunt at the door of Stollborg, and started with her governess and the Akerstrom family for the parsonage, where she was to take some rest before returning to Dalby. She did not exchange a word, or even a glance, with Christian, but it was none the less tacitly understood between them that she was not to leave the neighborhood until they had seen each other again.

The major returned, with his soldiers and his prisoners, to the new chateau, where he was to await the receipt of orders as to whether he was to continue the exercise of his authority. The danneman and his family returned to their mountain, Karine, to the last, being unable to comprehend that she beheld in Christian the child of the lake. Her mind could not so readily be brought back, from the fantasies in which she lived, to a perception of real things. And indeed, even in after years, although her condition was very much ameliorated, although she felt instinctively that she was freed from a great trouble, she never, while she lived, really succeeded in identifying Christian, and she very often confounded him with his father, the young Baron Adelstan.

It was four o'clock in the morning; and though it was the custom of the country to go to bed very late, at a time of the year when the nights are so long, the principal persons of our story had passed through such a series of vehement emotions, that they were all overwhelmed with fatigue. They all retired, therefore, and slept profoundly, being more fortunate in this, probably, than Johan and his gang, shut up in the tower of the new chateau, where they had imprisoned and tortured so many people.

However, before daybreak, Stenson glided softly to Christian's bedside, and after gazing upon him with rapture for a few seconds, he waked him, without arousing M. Goeffe.

"Rise, my master!" he whispered in his ear, "I have something to say to you which must be heard by yourself alone! I will await you in the inner room."

Christian dressed himself quickly and silently, and closing the doors behind him, followed Stenson into the deserted and dilapidated apartment into which he had penetrated on the previous evening. The old man uncovered his head with reverence.

"Here, Monsieur Baron," he said, "behind this wainscot, where you see a dove carved in marble, a mystery is hidden, that ought to be revealed to you alone. Here it is that your mother had secretly erected an altar to the Virgin; for she was a Catholic, the fact is too certain. The exercise of her worship being forbidden in her husband's country, madame was obliged to conceal her faith, so as not to draw down persecution upon his head.

"Pastor Mickelson could never prove this. The altar was brought and placed in this hiding-place by Italian workmen, travelling through the country, who had executed other commissions in marble, and in wood, at the new chateau. I was the only person in her confidence. There was a learned old Frenchman among the retainers of the chateau, who was a Catholic priest, unknown to every one, and who said mass here secretly; but he had died, and the Italian workmen had departed at the time of the persecution of your poor mother. You must see this altar, Monsieur Baron, and, whatever may be your own religion, you must regard it with respect. Help me to move the spring in the wainscot, which is probably very rusty."

"You mean that your poor arms are swollen and aching," said Christian, kissing the old man's tortured hands.

"Ah! do not pity me," said Stenson, "my hands will get well; I do not feel them, all that I have suffered is as nothing in comparison with my present happiness."

Christian opened the wainscot as Stenson directed, and

after drawing a curtain of gilt leather, he saw a white marble altar, in the form of a sarcophagus. Stenson, who was deeply agitated, fell upon his knees.

"Are you a Catholic also, my friend?" Christian asked.

Stenson shook his head in the negative, but without seeming offended by the question. Tears rolled slowly over his pallid cheeks.

"Stenson!" cried Christian, "my mother reposes here. This altar became her tomb!"

"Yes," said the old man, almost suffocated by his sobs; "here it is that Karine and I buried her, in her white robe, and crowned with a cypress wreath, for it was not the season of flowers. We laid her in a coffin filled with aromatics, and the coffin we placed in this sepulchre, stainless as that of Christ. I sealed it up myself, and afterwards I walled up the room, so that the tomb of the victim should not be profaned. Your enemy never knew why I was so anxious to suppress the door. He thought I was afraid of ghosts. When the minister refused to bury a *pagan* with religious services, and in sacred ground, he thought I obeyed his orders, and threw the poor body into the bottom of the lake; but whatever Pastor Mickelson may have said, it was the body of a saint. Whatever her worship may have been, the baroness loved God, did good, and respected the faith of others. She is in heaven, and prays for us now, and her soul is happy in beholding her son where he is, and such as he is."

"Ah!" said Christian, "happiness does not belong, then, to this world, for I should have made her happy, and she is dead."

He kissed the tomb with respect and fervor, and having reinclosed it behind the curtain and the panel of the wainscot, he went down with Stenson into the bear-room.

"I do not know," the old man resumed, "how much trouble and delay there may be before your rights are acknowledged; but I hope you will empower me to restore the partition before this chamber. When you are master here, we can carry the tomb to the chapel in the new chateau."

"Place my mother's tomb by that of Baron Olaus!"

cried Christian. "Oh no, never! Since Sweden refused her a plot of ground to cover her bones, after having refused her air and liberty, I will carry off these precious remains, and deposit them under a more element sky. Whether rich or poor, I will procure enough to bear this relic with me to the shore of the Italian lake, where sleeps my second mother; she who fulfilled the last prayer of her who gave me birth, and who, although herself most unhappy, had at least a son to close her eyes."

"Act with calmness and prudence," replied Stenson, "or your rights will be denied. Some day you will be free to do as you choose; for the present, do not allow even your best friends, even the worthy M. Goeffe, to know that your mother was a dissenter. He will argue your cause with more hope and confidence, believing that she was not so; and if you yourself are a dissenter, do not acknowledge it, or you will not be able to triumph over your enemies."

"Alas!" said Christian, "are riches worth the trouble I must take to acquire them? can they repay me for practising dissimulation and repressing my just indignation, as I am urged and forced to do? I had nothing, Stenson, not even an obole, when I came here three days ago, but my heart was light, my mind was free! I felt no hatred to any human being, no one hated me, and now —"

"And now you will be less free and less happy. I know," replied the sweet and austere old man, gravely; "but you will have power to comfort and console the poor and suffering. Think of that, and it will give you strength to struggle for your rights."

"Well said, my dear Stenson!" cried M. Goeffe, who had just risen, and who heard the last words of the pious old retainer. "Whoever meets as he ought the duties and responsibilities which life imposes, rivets chains upon his feet, and insures for himself many bitter hours. It remains to be seen whether the man who, in the glory of his youth and strength, finds himself confronted with a plain duty, and who turns away to escape from it, can

still be happy in heedless indifference, and can venture to claim that he is contented with himself."

"You are right, my friend," said Christian; "do what you choose with me. I promise to be guided by your advice."

"And then," added M. Goeffe, lowering his voice, "our sweet Margaret ought, I think, to be a sufficient compensation for enduring the life of a grand seigneur!"

It was decided by M. Goeffe that Christian should leave Waldemora, where he could exert no authority until his inheritance should be secured to him by the decision of the special committee of the Diet, a mysterious, special, and privileged tribunal, which claimed the right of removing suits pending in ordinary courts, especially those in which the nobility were interested. It was necessary for Christian to accompany his lawyer to Stockholm, so as to demand and solicit a decision.

Before bidding farewell to Stollborg, both of them, however, went to the parsonage, where Christian, after thanking Minister Akerstrom respectfully and affectionately, appointed him guardian of his estates, in so far as it depended upon him, and in the very just anticipation that his choice would be ratified by the house of nobles. He had no opportunity of being alone with Margaret; and even if he could have spoken to her freely, he would not have wished to draw her into an engagement until he was sure that he would not become Christian Waldo again. But Margaret felt no doubt either of his intentions or his success, and returned to her retreat with her heart full of the blissful hopes of youth, and the faith of a first love.

Christian refused to go and breakfast at the new chateau with the major and his friends. They understood his repugnance, and dined with M. Goeffe and the young baron in Stenson's *gaard*. In the evening they were all invited to supper at the parsonage. Margaret was not to start until the next day. On the following day Christian also took his departure with M. Goeffe, who amused himself by driving Loki, to the great satisfaction of Nils,

who slept soundly during the whole journey, never waking up at all, except to eat.

After passing two weeks at Stockholm, where Christian conducted himself with great prudence, reserve, and dignity, M. Goefle, who was very impatient to return to Gevala, invited him to go there, while awaiting the decision of the supreme court, especially as there was every reason to believe that there would be a great deal of delay in the matter, since, in consequence of the death of the king, and succession of Prince Henry (now become Gustavus III.), the ruling powers were unusually busy and preoccupied. But Christian, foreseeing that he would be left in uncertainty for an indefinite period, did not feel willing to live at M. Goefle's expense during all this time, and resolved to carry out his plan of taking a journey with Danneman Bøetsoi into the savage and frozen regions in the northern part of Norway. Equally unwilling to be a burden to the brave peasant, he accepted from M. Goefle a very moderate advance upon his inheritance, or upon his future labor; and, after embracing his friends at Waldemora and at Stollborg, he set off with Bøetsoi, once more leaving his dear Jean under the charge of Stenson.

CONCLUSION.

CHRISTIAN had abundance of leisure to travel. In spite of all the precautions taken by his friends, and notwithstanding M. Goefle's incessant exertions, the recognition of his rights was so vehemently opposed by the caps, the party to which the Baron de Lindenwald belonged, that a moment came when the active and courageous lawyer regarded the cause of his client as lost. The Russian ambassador, who at first had been favorable, turned against them, no one knew why, and Countess Elveda formed other projects of marriage for her niece. M. Goefle appealed in person to the young king; but Gustavus III., who even then was planning, with incredible prudence, the grand revolution of August, 1772,

advised patience, without giving any intimation of the hopes which he himself had conceived. In fact the king, as yet, could do nothing.

After travelling with the danneman until the end of February, Christian received news from M. Goeffe which decided him to continue alone his explorations in the regions of the north. M. Goeffe, finding that Christian's enemies were very powerful, feared, with reason, that they would seek opportunities of quarrelling with him, if he should appear in Stockholm. He knew how excitable Christian was, and he said to himself that, even if he should kill one or two of his opponents, he would stand a good chance of being killed by the third. There were too many persons whose interest it was to irritate him, and draw him into duels. M. Goeffe took good care not to explain to Christian the real grounds of his opinion, but he urged him not to count upon a speedy success, and advised him to remain away.

At the same time he sent him an additional sum, which Christian resolved not to add to the amount of the debt which he had already incurred. In his uncertain position he joined a crew of fishermen, who were about sailing for the Luffoden Islands; and, in the beginning of April, he wrote to M. Goeffe as follows:

"Here I am in a small, straggling village of Nordland, where it seems to me that I have entered the land of Canaan, although the chalet of Danneman Bøetsoi is a Louvre in comparison with my present lodging, and his kakebroe delicious cake by the side of the bread of pure wood in which I am now luxuriating. You will guess from this that I have been through a great deal of suffering, without referring to our fatigue and dangers. But, on the other hand, I have seen the most terrible spectacles of the universe, the most austere and sublime scenes of nature: sub-marine gulfs, into which ships and whales are drawn like autumn leaves in a current of wind; rivers which never freeze, in the midst of ice that never melts; waterfalls whose roaring can be heard leagues away; precipices upon whose verge the reindeer and the elk grow dizzy; snows harder than the marble of Paros; men as

ugly as monkeys—angelic souls in unclean bodies, a hospitable people dwelling in unheard-of misery—a patient, gentle and pious people living in eternal conflict with nature, who appears to them under her most formidable and violent aspect. I have had no disappointments. Everything that I have seen has been more sublime, or more astonishing, than all that I had imagined.

“So, then, I am a fortunate traveller. Add that my health has withstood all hardships, and that my purse is so well filled that I am in condition to pay off my debt to you, and still have money of my own; lastly, that I have succeeded in studying the geological formation of a long chain of mountains, from which I bring back treasures—in the way of rare and precious specimens—that will make the illustrious Professor Stangstadius pine away with envy, and useful observations that ought to make me—if I take it into my head to aspire to the honor, and exert a little diplomacy to obtain it—Knight of the Polar Star.

“You will ask me how I have grown rich so fast. By enduring a great deal of fatigue; by running the risk, a thousand times, of being drowned or of breaking my neck; by skating along the verge of fearful chasms, on great skates which I have learned to use; by catching a great many fish in the Norwegian archipelago; by selling my cargo on the spot, and very cheap, to those who have a genius for trade; and, lastly, by exposing myself to the danger of being beaten to death by my comrades for my pains. However, they gave up this fancy when they found out that my arm was ready and my hand heavy.

“Now I am going to Bergen, where I must arrive before the thaw, unless I want to be shut up here for six weeks by whirlwinds and avalanches, which man is not strong enough to conquer.

“Do not be distressed, O best of men and of friends! if I lose my suit. I shall make out to be something, and since Margaret is poor (as long as I am *well-born*), I may win her yet. And then, am I not secure of your friendship? I only ask of Heaven to enable me to take care of my dear Stenson in his feeble old age, if he should lose

his annuity, and be driven from his asylum at Stollborg."

M. Goefle received several other letters of the same sort during the following summer and winter. The lawsuit made no progress; in fact there was no suit, in any proper sense of the word. The presumptive heirs carried on the war in the most fatal and insidious way, by interposing constant obstacles, preventing or delaying the decision of the committee.

Christian, in the meanwhile, was beginning to be satiated with danger, fatigue, and hard work. He did not acknowledge it to his friend, but the exuberance of his curiosity was satisfied. His heart, which had been awakened to a new life by hopes that would perhaps prove deceitful, often claimed the happiness of which he had caught a glimpse. His heroic resolutions, and the cheerful energy of his character, were fully equal to the requirements of his terrible life, as he called it, but in silence, in the secrecy of his soul, he was often unhappy. The time had come when the bird, according to Major Larrson's expression, fatigued with flying through the vastness of space, was longing to find a milder sky; and a sure place to build his nest.

In spite of his intelligence and his activity, Christian was several times overtaken by poverty. The life of the traveller is a series of Godsendings and losses, of unexpected successes, and desperate disasters. He earned enough to live upon from day to day, by selling game and fish, and by exchanging commodities transported over great distances with incredible courage and resolution. And yet the young baron, careless, confident, and generous as he was, had not been born a merchant, and his troubles and anxieties could not transform the aristocratic liberality of his character.

Unavoidable accidents, moreover, often defeated his wisest calculations; and one day, he found that his own life must be governed by the ideal of heroic desperation with which he had entertained Major Larrson on the mountain of Blaakdal. Like Gustavus Wasa, he became a workman in the mines, and, as with that hero of a

romantic epopée, he was soon recognized as an extraordinary workman, not so much on account of the embroidered collar of his shirt, but rather from the authority of his language and his haughty expression.

Christian, at this time, was in the mines of Roraas, in the highest mountains of Norway, at about ten leagues from the Swedish frontier. He had been working like a common day-laborer for eight days, but with a skill and vigor that had procured him the respect of his companions, when he received a letter from M. Goefle to the following purport :

"All is lost. I have seen the king, and he is a charming man—but nothing more! I made known to him who you are: I laid all my proofs before him; I told him how you felt, and how useful you could be to a philosophical and courageous prince who wished to establish equality of rights in the nation. After listening to me with an attention and comprehending with a lucidity that I have never encountered in any judge, he replied :

"'Unfortunately, Monsieur Advocate, it is a great task to do justice to the oppressed, and one beyond my strength. I should be crushed in attempting it, like my poor father, whom the nobility doomed to perish of weariness and grief.'

"Gustavus is feeble and good; he does not wish to die! We flattered ourselves in vain that he would smite the senate with heavy blows. Sweden is lost, and our suit also!

"Come back to me, Christian. I love and respect you. I have a little fortune, and no children. Say the word, and I will make you my partner. You speak Swedish captivately; you are eloquent. You shall study law, and be my successor. I await you."

"No!" cried Christian, kissing the letter of his generous friend; "I understand better than he thinks how limited the resources of this country are, and what great sacrifices such an association would condemn this noble man to make. And then it would take years to study law, and, during all that time, I should have to be supported—young and strong as I am—by

one who, after a laborious and anxious life, deserves now to enjoy comfort and repose! No no! I have my hands, and I shall use them, until destiny shows me some better way than this of making my talents available."

While thus reflecting, he returned to the gallery where it was his duty to excavate one of the veins of copper distributed through the rocks, by the light of a little lamp, and amid the sulphureous emanations rising from the mine.

But after a few days Christian's position was materially improved. The superintendent of the mines noticed him, and put him at the head of certain works, which he was fitted by education and capacity to direct, as he had shown, without any pretence or affectation, when an opportunity occurred. Learned, modest, and industrious, he spent his leisure hours in instructing the miners. In the evenings he delivered a course of gratuitous lectures on elementary mineralogy, and was listened to by these rude men, who respected him as an industrious comrade, and looked up to him as an original and cultivated thinker. His lecture-room was one of the great metallic caverns to which miners love to give high-sounding names. His chair was a block of naked copper.

Christian tried to make himself happy by working hard, and doing good to others; for happiness is what man always seeks, even when he sacrifices himself. He took care of the sick and wounded in the mine. When accidents occurred, he, with heroic courage, was always the first to hasten to the spot, and he taught the workmen, moreover, to guard against these terrible dangers by exerting ordinary common sense and prudence. He tried to refine their manners, and to cure them of their fatal passion for brandy, the too fruitful source of quarrels and fights that often terminated in the terrific duel with knives in vogue in this part of the country. They both loved and esteemed him; but, since he devoted all his wages to helping cripples, orphans and widows, he remained poor.

"Decidedly," he often said to himself, as he stepped into the bucket to descend to the bottom of the immeas-

urable shaft, "I was born a seigneur—that is to say, as I understand it, the protector of the feeble—and for that reason I am not permitted to live in the light of the sun."

"Christian," cried the inspector, one day, through the speaking-tube at the frightful mouth of the mine, "stop working for a while, and go to the bottom of the inclines, to receive some visitors, who want to see the large halls. Show them round in my place—I have no time to come down."

As usual, Christian lighted the great resinous torches which are kept ready in all parts of the excavations, and went to meet the visitors. But when he recognized Minister Akerstrom and his family, and Lieutenant Osburn with his young bride Martina leaning upon his arm, Christian handed his torch to an old miner whom he knew, and, saying that he had been seized with cramp, begged him to conduct the visitors in his stead. Pulling down his tarred cap over his eyes, he stepped back, rejoicing in his inmost heart to see his friends happy, but unwilling to be recognized, lest they should be distressed about him, and should make known his situation to Margaret.

He was about to withdraw, after having listened for a moment to their cheerful and animated conversation, when Madame Osburn turned, saying:

"Why does not Margaret come? The little coward will never dare cross that plank bridge!"

"Oh, you were very much afraid yourself, my dear Martina!" replied the lieutenant. "But you need not be anxious; M. Stangstadius is with her."

Christian, forgetting all about his cramp, ran swiftly along the steep, vaulted passage that led to the plank-bridge, which was really very dangerous, and which Margaret was to cross in company with M. Stangstadius, the man of all the world who knew best himself how to fall to advantage, but not, perhaps, the most capable person in the world of protecting others.

Margaret was really there, hesitating and dizzy, together with Mademoiselle Potin, who, hoping to encourage

her young friend, had already crossed the planks quite bravely, with the assistance of M. Stangstadius. The lieutenant returned to assist them, and to quiet his wife; but, before he could reach the spot, Christian stepped up, took Margaret in his arms, and crossed the subterranean torrent in silence.

Certainly Margaret did not recognize him, for she shut her eyes tightly to avoid beholding the chasm beneath. He put her down near her friends, intending to make his escape as quickly as possible, but Margaret, who was still frightened, tottered, and he was obliged to take her hand, and to draw her away from the precipice. His fingers, blackened by his work, left a mark upon the young girl's delicate green gloves, and he saw her, a moment afterwards, wipe it off carefully with her handkerchief, while saying to her governess:

"Give some money quickly to that poor man who carried me."

The poor man had run away with his heart a little swollen; he was not angry with the young countess for liking clean gloves, but he said to himself that it was quite impossible for him, for his part, to have white hands.

He returned to the forge, where he was having some tools made after an improved pattern, suggested by himself and approved of by the inspectors; but after an hour's labor, for he often lent a hand himself to help on his men, he heard the visitors returning, and could not resist his desire of again seeing the young countess. She had seemed to him a little taller, and greatly improved; beautiful enough, indeed, to madden the blindest and sulkiest of the cyclops.

As the voices again became more distant, he entered, without any precaution, a gallery through which the party would be obliged to pass, when suddenly, in a brightly-lighted hall, he met Margaret face to face. Now that she had become a little accustomed to the terrific noises and gloomily sublime aspect of this subterranean world, she had recovered her courage, and was coming forward alone, in advance of the others. She trembled on seeing

him; she thought that she recognized him. He pulled his cap quickly over his forehead, and she knew him then, beyond a doubt, by the care he took to hide his face.

"Christian!" she cried; "it is you, I am sure of it!" And she held out her hand.

"Do not touch me!" said Christian. "I am all black with powder and smoke."

"Ah! what do I care for that," she replied, "since it is you? I know all now. The miners who have been showing us about have been talking all the while of a certain Christian, a very learned man and a famous workman, who would not tell his family name, but who has the strength of a peasant and the dignity of an earl, who is courageous for all and devoted to all. Our friends did not suppose for a moment that it could be you, there are so many Christians in this Scandinavian land! But, for my part, I said to myself: 'There is only one answering to that description; it is he!' Come, then, shake hands! Are we not still brother and sister, as at Stollborg?"

How could Christian help forgetting the little offence of the wiped glove? Margaret held out her hand to him ungloved.

"You do not blush, then, to see me here?" he said; "you know that I have not been driven to come here by bad conduct, and that if I am working to-day, it is not to make up for days of idleness and folly?"

"I do not know anything about you," replied Margaret, "except that you have kept your word given formerly to Major Larrison, to be a miner, or a hunter of bears, rather than continue an occupation of which I did not approve."

"And I, Margaret, do not know anything about you either," he replied, "except that your aunt intends to have you marry the Baron de Lindenwald, my suit against whom it appears is lost."

"It is true," said Margaret, laughing. "My aunt hopes, in that way, to console me for the death of Baron Olaus. But since you guess so well what is going on, you ought to know, also, that I do not intend to marry at all."

Christian understood this resolution, which left him free

to hope, and he vowed in his heart that he would make a fortune, even if he should have to become an egotist. In spite of all he could say, Margaret would not consent to hide the fact of his being there from the lieutenant and the minister's family, who drew near in the midst of their tête-à-tête.

"It is he!" she cried, running to meet them; "it is our Stollborg friend—you know who I mean! This Christian, this friend of the poor, the hero of the mine, is the baron without a barony, but not without honor and heart, and if you are not as happy as I am to see him again—"

"We are, we are!" cried the minister, shaking hands with Christian. "He is setting a grand example of true nobility and religious faith."

Christian, overwhelmed with caresses, praise, and questions, was obliged to promise to go and take supper in the village with his friends, who intended to pass the night there before returning to Waldemora, where Margaret was spending a fortnight at the parsonage.

They wanted to carry him away with them immediately; but, on the one hand, Christian could not dispose of his time so freely as they supposed, and, on the other, he was more anxious, than was quite appropriate for such a reasonable man, to dress himself in clothes, which, however coarse, should at least be irreproachably clean. They made an appointment to meet in the evening, and Christian, aroused and happy, returned to his work.

There, however, he was agitated by tumultuous and conflicting thoughts. Ought he to persist in cherishing the chimerical hope that he was loved? Margaret expressed her affection for him with too much warmth, too much frankness; it might be that she regarded him merely with a peaceful friendship, bringing no trouble to her soul, no blush to her forehead! Could love be so spontaneous, so courageous, so expansive? He accused himself of presumption and folly; and then, a moment afterwards, he accused himself of ingratitude; an inner voice told him that, whatever his fate might be, he would always find Margaret resolved to share it.

He left his work at last, when the hour came for quitting

the mine, and as he greatly preferred being pulled up in the bucket, in which he never felt dizzy, to making the long ascent over the ladders and inclines, he got ready to mount, in a moment, to the entrance of the gloomy shaft, through which he could catch a glimpse of a scrap of blue sky framed with branches of the mountain-ash and lilacs. Just then a miner came up, whom he had already met on the previous evening within his limits, although he did not belong to the brigade that he had joined at first, and which he was now directing.

None of the miners with whom Christian was associated knew this man. Excessively begrimed with smoke and dirt, either through negligence or design, and wearing a rag of a hat that flapped about his ears, it was not easy to form any idea of his face. Christian had not tried to see him. He might be one of those who were called humble workmen; as we sometimes say the humble poor, in speaking of persons whose apparent humility is perhaps a mere mask concealing their silent pride. Christian respected the evident desire of the unknown to avoid observation; and after having given the customary whistle to warn those who worked the pulley, he contented himself with pointing to a seat by his side in the bucket; for he supposed that he also wished to ascend. The unknown hesitated. Laying his hands upon the edge of the bucket, he seemed about to jump in, but paused, and looked around, apparently to seek for something.

"You have lost a tool, perhaps?" said Christian, who noticed that he was quite stout and heavy, and had nothing of the freedom and ease which is usual with miners accustomed to the use of the bucket.

Scarcely had he spoken, when the unknown, who seemed to have been waiting to hear his voice before coming to some decision, took the seat by his side with more resolution than agility, and waited in silence for the second whistle.

Christian supposed that he did not understand Norwegian, and being familiar by this time with almost all the dialects of the north, he tried to enter into conversation with him; but all his efforts were useless. The man remained perfectly silent, as if fright at seeing himself

suspended directly over the abyss had paralyzed his faculties. The bucket, as it is called, employed in mines, is made, as the reader knows, of stout staves, bound with iron, and requires to be steered in its passage up and down the tremendous shaft. Christian, who was already accustomed to this mode of transportation, worked it very skilfully. Standing on the edge, with one arm thrown around a rope, he lightly struck the sides of the shaft with his foot, to prevent the rocking bucket from being broken against them, and, having given up getting anything out of his companion, he began quietly to sing a Venetian barcarolle, when his foot—the only one that happened to be on the edge of the conveyance at the moment—was treacherously pushed with sufficient force to make him lose his balance, and send him swinging off into the void.

Fortunately, Christian, who was habitually no less prudent than bold, had grasped the rope firmly with his left arm, and he slipped down somewhat as a basket would have done by the handle, without loosening his hold. The unknown lifted his sharp-edged hammer with the intention of striking off his right hand, with which Christian had saved himself by seizing the edge of the bucket. He would inevitably have lost one of his hands, and probably his life as well, had it not been for the swinging and sudden dip of the bucket, jerked down by the weight of his body. At the same time his feet, as they hung in the air, struck a second bucket, which had been let down from above, and he was able to give the first one such a push that the assassin was obliged to take to the ropes himself, in order to keep from being thrown out.

This moment was sufficient to enable Christian to cling to the second rope, and jump into the second bucket, which ascended rapidly, while the one in which the assassin remained alone, disappeared from sight with even greater rapidity. Just as Christian reached the top of the shaft, and jumped out on the platform around it, a dull crash ascended from its depths, while, at that very

moment, Stangstadius, with his fantastic face all radiant with smiles, came up to him.

"Come, my dear baron," he cried, "make haste! They will not have supper over yonder in the village until you arrive, and I am dying of inanition."

"What has happened?" cried Christian to the miners who were working the pulley, without answering Stangstadius; "where is the other bucket? Where is the man?—"

"The rope broke," replied one of them, with a tremendous oath, and pretending to deplore the accident, while the other whispered in Christian's ear:

"Not a word! We let him fall!"

"What! you have precipitated this unfortunate—this madman—?"

"This unfortunate was not a madman," replied the workman. "He has been looking out for an opportunity to be alone with you for three days. We watched him, and saw what he wanted to do. We let down another bucket at a venture; and as for the one he is in, it is a bucket spoiled, that is all about it!"

Christian knew that these rough miners were in the habit of taking the law into their own hands, and that they dealt out to criminals summary and terrible justice.

He felt the more regret and anxiety about what had happened, because he knew, also, that people who enter this subterranean world when rather advanced in years, are sometimes seized with fits of involuntary and ungovernable fury. He descended into the mine again with Stangstadius, who claimed, with good reason, to have a professional knowledge of such accidents. Two of the miners went down with them, to investigate, they said, but in reality to remove the corpse, so as to avoid being obliged to give any explanation to the inspectors of the mine.

"Faith," said Stangstadius, when they had examined the miserable body by the light of their torches, "he is done for! He was not so lucky as I! By heavens! I declare I must draw up a report on the use of ropes in descending buckets in mines. These accidents are too frequent—when I think that even I myself—"

"Monsieur Stangstadius!" cried Christian, "look at this man. Do you not know him?"

"By heavens, it is a fact!" replied Stangstadius; "it is Master Johan, the ex-major-domo of Waldemora. Oh then, there is no great harm done! He confessed in prison; it was this very fellow who assassinated poor Baron Adelstan, in former years — *à propos!* yes, your father, my dear Christian. This Johan was once a miner in Falun, and he was a great scoundrel. It appears that he made his escape from his last prison, but it was written in his destiny that he was to perish by the rope."

Delighted with this bon-mot, M. Stangstadius returned with Christian to the upper world, while the workmen, after having thrown the corpse into a deserted pit, well known to them, in the deepest part of the works, set quietly to work to mend the bucket. Christian, who had a room in a little house in the village, ran thither to change his dress. He found a letter awaiting him that had just been brought by a courier; it was from M. Goefle.

"All is saved!" he wrote; "the king is good, as I told you, but not weak, as I thought. He is a gallant fellow, who — but you will have time enough to hear about that. Make all speed! Be at Waldemora on the twelfth; you will find one of your friends there, and hear some good news.

"Until a speedy meeting, I am, my dear baron," etc.

Christian did not say a word about this letter to his friends, with whom he took supper at the parsonage of the minister of Roraas, where the minister of Waldemora and his party had been entertained with cordial hospitality. After supper, he found an opportunity of being alone with Margaret and her governess. He was bolder than he had ever been. He dared to speak of love. Mademoiselle Potin wanted to interrupt him, but Margaret, in her turn, interrupted her friend.

"Christian," she said, "I do not well know what love is, or what distinction there can be between that sentiment and the feeling with which I regard you. But one thing I do know, and that is, that I respect and esteem you, and that if I am ever free, and you are the same, I

will share your fortune, whatever it may be. I have worked very hard since we parted, and I shall be able now to give lessons or keep accounts, like so many other poor young girls who support themselves, and who have too much good sense to blush upon that account;—like Mademoiselle Potin herself, whose family is noble, and who has not lost in the opinion of any one, but, on the other hand, who has been elevated in the eyes of all persons of real feeling, by having the courage to make use of her talents. To prove it," she added, glancing tenderly and archly at her governess, "I need only tell you that she is betrothed secretly to the excellent Major Larrison, and is only waiting until my affairs are a little more settled, to celebrate her marriage."

It was impossible for Mademoiselle Potin to contradict Margaret, but she was none the less angry with Christian for speaking to her of love at the very moment when his suit was lost, and she felt still more indignant on the following morning, when he joined their little party to cross the mountains, and return to Sweden by the Idre, and the mountains of Blaakdal. On the next day, the twelfth of June, 1772, Christian saw the friend to whom M. Goefle had referred, coming to meet him on the mountain-road over which they were travelling; it was no other than M. Goefle himself, escorted by Major Larrison. They embraced each other, and after briefly exchanging joyful and affectionate greetings, hastened forward, and arrived by dinner-time at the danneman's chalet, which they found gayly adorned with wild flowers. Karine was at the door, only partly comprehending what was passing, and finding it difficult to recognize the child of the lake in the features of the handsome young iarl.

The dinner was served in the open air, under a bower of foliage, in sight of the magnificent prospect of mountains, with whose wild and melancholy beauty Christian had been so deeply impressed on a day in December. The summer is short in these elevated regions, but it is magnificent. The verdure is as dazzling as the snows; the vegetation grows with such rapidity, and is so luxuri-

ant, that Christian imagined he was beholding a different locality and a different country.

They remained upon the mountain until six o'clock. But no one thought now of hunting bears ; instead, they plucked flowers sentimentally from beside running streams, and listened to their sweet murmuring or impetuous rolling—so eager, as all of them seemed, with their various voices, to sing and to live to the utmost, before the return of the frost, when they must all be changed into crystal again by the elfs of the gloomy autumn.

Christian was very happy, and yet he was longing to see Stenson once more ; but M. Stenson would not consent to leave the chalet, on account of the heat. The sun, at this season, does not set until ten o'clock, and it rises three hours afterwards, in a starry twilight that softly veils the sky ; for, during the summer, the darkness of a genuine night is unknown. In fact, the good lawyer had prepared a surprise for Christian. As soon as the cool evening breeze began to be felt, old Stenson drove up in a carriage, triumphant and rejuvenated. Thanks to the heat of the season, and perhaps also to his returning joy and confidence, his deafness was almost entirely cured. He brought the decree of the committee of the Diet, recognizing Christian's rights, and a letter from Countess Elveda to M. Goeffe, authorizing him privately to dispose of the hand of her niece in favor of the new Baron of Waldemora.

Christian returned to the chateau with *his uncle* Goeffe, while the rest of the party followed in their various carriages over the winding and picturesque road ; but, in the midst of the young man's joy, as he anticipated the reunion of all his beloved friends, he was seized with a sudden fit of melancholy.

"I am too happy," he said to the lawyer ; "I should like to die to-day. It seems to me that the life into which I am about to enter will be in constant conflict with the simple and pure happiness I have dreamed about."

"It is quite possible, my friend," replied M. Goeffe ; "for it is only novels that end with the eternal formula : 'They died in old age, after a long and happy life.' You

cannot come into contact with the world as a public man without suffering; for society is terribly convulsed in these days, and above all in the aristocratic circles where you will take your place. I do not know what strange events are preparing; and yet I had a sort of revelation of the future in the last interview which the king granted me. On that day, he seemed to me both grand and terrible. I believe he is meditating a movement which will send a good many people back where they belong; but can he keep them there, and will he? Can revolutions establish a permanent condition of things, when they come in advance of the slow labor of time and ideas?"

"Not always," said Christian, "but they form landmarks in history; even when an effort at reformation is premature, something is always gained."

"Then you will really support the king against the senate?"

"Yes, most certainly!"

"You see, then, that you do not intend to flee the tempest, but to seek it. Well, that is always the way with the young, at least when they are intelligent; instinct and fate drives them on. For my part, I will say amen to whatever frees us from Russia and England. But how the devil do you propose to sit in the senate, if you refuse to acknowledge the religion of the country? But no matter, do not answer now; you will see hereafter what your conscience dictates, and what course you will have to pursue, in order to fulfil your duties as a father and a citizen."

"My duties as a father!" cried Christian. "Ah! M. Goefse, it will be in fulfilling them that I shall find happiness; I feel it! *Mon Dieu!* When I am united at last to that brave and loyal woman, how I shall love our children—to whom she will transmit disinterestedness and nobility of character, as well as grace and beauty!"

"Yes, yes, Christian, you will be happy in your family. That is due to you for your devotion to poor Sophia Goffredi! You will live in the Swedish fashion, on your estates, in the enjoyment of every comfort, and in the presence of the grand and rude nature of the north. You

will cultivate science and the fine arts. You will make the poor around you happy, as your predecessor has made them miserable. You will bring up your children yourself. Those little rascals will be surrounded, as soon as they are born, with love and devotion ; and they will grow up with the children of Osmund and of Osburn. For my part, I shall keep at my profession as long as possible, for I shall become too much of a babbler, and too nervous, when I stop pleading cases ; but every year I will come and pass the summer months with you. We will vie with each other in spoiling old Sten, and poor Karine ; we will build political castles in Spain ; we will dream of a cloudless alliance with France, and a Scandinavian union that will enable us to resist the ambitious designs of Russia. And, in the evenings, we will bring out the *burattini*, and give exhibitions to all the dear little folks assembled at the chateau ; and then, you may be sure, I shall become the equal of the famous Christian Waldo, of joyous and gentle memory."

JUNIATA COLLEGE



2820 9100 035 687 3

WITHDRAWN FROM
JUNIATA COLLEGE LIBRARY

PQ 2411 .S66 1898
Sand, George, 1804-1876
The snow man

843.82

Sa5sE

Juniata College Library
Huntingdon, Penna.

